DIVINE REVELATION
IMPARTIAL AND UNIVERSAL:

OR,

An humble ATTEMPT to defend

CHRISTIANITY,

UPON

RATIONAL PRINCIPLES,

AGAINST

The INFIDELITY and SCEPTICISM

OF THE AGE;

WITH NOTES,

Containing Obſervations upon moſt of the capital and diſtinguiſhed Unbelievers of the preſent Times, ſuch as HUME, VOLTAIRE, RAYNAL, GIBBON; and inveſtigating and aſſigning the moſt probable Cauſes of this Infidelity.

By the Rev. JOHN BENNETT,
Curate of St. MARY's, MANCHESTER.

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TO THE MOST

REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

WILLIAM,

By DIVINE PROVIDENCE,

Lord Archbiſhop of YORK, High Almoner to the KING, One of his MAJESTY's Moſt Honourable Privy Council, Primate of ENGLAND and Metropolitan.

MY LORD,

THE eminence of your ſtation places you infinitely above the reach of my panegyric; and your delicacy would be hurt by a pompous dedication.

Situation, on my part, would give to the moſt ſincere expreſſion of my ſentiments the appearance of deſign, whilſt the laurels heaped on you by ſo obſcure an individual would not be worthy of your Grace's acceptance.

Without uttering a ſyllable, therefore, of your learning and diſtinctions—without a ſingle acknowledgment to you for condeſcenſions I have experienced, or favours I have received, permit me only to requeſt that you will take this little treatiſe into your notice and protection, and ſhelter it "under the ſhadow of your "wings," from the violence of adver-

adverſaries, and the tempeſts of the world.

To ſay any thing of the plan or execution of the work would be a very weak and ridiculous attempt to biaſs your concluſion. They both await the deciſion of your judgment, and look up, with "trembling hope," to your candid approbation. It may not, however, be improper to obſerve, by way of palliating the preſumption of appearing as an author in ſo very inquiring and enlightened an age, or the defects that may occur in any part of this treatiſe, that, at leaſt, it was written with a laudable intention, and is the

firſt and timid production of an infant and unpractiſed pen.

I am not without ſome ſolid reaſons for particularly addreſſing ſuch a work as this to your Grace's protection. Having received from your authority my exiſtence in the church; having, ſometimes, felt my emulation quickened by your encouraging epiſtles; living in a dioceſe which once was your own, and ſtill retains you for its Metropolitan; permit me to conclude, that, independently of your titles, or your ſtation, or your greatneſs, there is ſome degree of juſtice and propriety in ſuch a dedication.

At a time when books of this abſtracted nature are, by no means, the

the prevailing faſhionable entertainment—not likely to be read, much leſs to be admired—when "ſentiment" is all the rage, and that ſentiment varied into ſo many forms of light publication; the utmoſt which I can promiſe to myſelf, is to gain the attention of thoſe diſtinguiſhed few, who read leſs ſuperficially, who inveſtigate more nicely, who endeavour to trace up knowledge to its ſource, and have formed their taſte upon the purer models of claſſical refinement.

In the liſt of theſe profounder and more accurate inquirers, the world hath long ſince univerſally conſpired to include the Prelate whom

whom I have now the honour of addreſſing.—And if, as he peruſes this little work, he ſhould entertain a favourable opinion of its execution, my vanity will receive its higheſt gratification, and the labour it hath coſt me will immediately ſoften into pleaſing recollection: "Actos juvabit me-"miniſſe labores."

With ſuch an hope, and ſuch a view of ſupport, permit me to ſubſcribe myſelf, with all poſſible reſpect,

MY LORD,

Your Grace's moſt obedient

and obliged,

humble ſervant,

MANCHESTER,
May 27, 1783.

JOHN BENNETT.

PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

THE fall of man from his original innocence, with its attendant conſequences of darkneſs in his underſtanding, and depravity in his affections; the conſequent neceſſity of divine Revelation to elucidate his duty; the time and mode in which, and the people to whom, that Revelation hath been given; the peculiar hiſtory, and temper, and religious ceremonies of the Jews, their ſtubbornneſs, cruelty, and apparent unworthineſs of ſo high an indulgence, as that of becoming the choſen of Heaven, and poſſeſſing the oracles of God; the deplorable ignorance, ſtill, of many heathen nations, the imperfect, and the ſeemingly partial propagation of the doctrines of the goſpel; have been, I think, the ground-work of the principal difficulties, ſpeculations, and

and diſputes, which have perplexed the world on this important ſubject, and have furniſhed unbelievers with ſome of their favourite and moſt plauſible objections to the Chriſtian inſtitution.

The following pages, I am ready to confeſs, are but a modeſt, humble attempt to obviate all or ſome of theſe objections, by endeavouring to prove, that the uniform, unvarying plan of Deity hath been the diffuſion of religious information and happineſs to all the people and ages of the world; that his mode of doing this, as well, likewiſe, as the nature, the degree, and the extent of the Revelations he hath vouchſafed, may have conſiderably varied, or, to a ſuperficial obſerver, had the appearance of partiality, only as beſt accommodated to the times and ſeaſons in which they have been given, and the diſpoſitions of mankind, in different ages, countries, and circumſtances to receive and improve them, upon the principle of that free-

will,

will, free-agency, and choice which conſtitute the very eſſence of intelligent creation; that Chriſtianity would probably have been communicated ſooner, in all its fulneſs and perfection, if earlier times and people had "been able to bear," or make a proper uſe of, the ineſtimable bleſſing; that ceremonies and obſervances, apparently to us burdenſome and abſurd, were certainly the beſt and only religion of which a hardened and unrefined people were in any meaſure capable, and obviouſly the ſtrongeſt and moſt effectual barrier againſt the dangerous inroads of idolatry, and the ravages of ſuperſtition; that the nations, which now ſit in a lamentable darkneſs, have either, ſome time, miſuſed divine information, are either neglected by our indolence and remiſſneſs in not properly improving the providential opportunities put into our hands, for effecting their converſion, or, at leaſt, that this their converſion is obſtructed by ſome other, external, ſecondary circumſtances

ſtances of government or laws, want of diſcipline and education, or luxury and ſenſualities, for which the goodneſs and other attributes of Deity cannot be impeached; and that, in the laſt place, if the mercy of heaven was not reſtrained in the univerſality of its exerciſe by ſome vices, ariſing from human imperfection, (the neceſſary conſequence of that free-agency in man, which, if divinely over-ruled, would put a period to his character as a probationary creature, and totally deſtroy the nature of his being) the earth, at this moment, would, probably, "be full of the knowledge of the "Lord, as the waters cover the ſeas."

It would betray an unpardonable vanity to ſuppoſe, that I had fully and ſatisfactorily anſwered or cleared up theſe important inquiries, or given a complete information on the ſubject: this, perhaps, is not within the compaſs of the human underſtanding, and, therefore, not to be expected in a ſtate, which, at beſt,

will

will always be tinctured with uncertainty; where our knowledge is conjecture, and ſome of the brighteſt virtues we can exerciſe are Faith and Reſignation. The obſervations contained in the following performance arrogate to themſelves no higher merit than that of being probable concluſions on a ſubject, which, perhaps, can never be ſufficiently unravelled till mortality is wholly ſwallowed up of life, and "we ſhall know, even as we are "known." The authorities produced in ſupport of my opinions are reſpectable and numerous guides, without which I ſhould never have preſumed to traverſe ſuch * unexplored and ſolitary paths. † If I ſhould have rouſed a ſpirit of inveſtigation,

* Semperque relinqui
Sola ſibi, ſemper longam incomitata videtur
Ire viam. Virg.

† I can, on this occaſion, very properly beſpeak the reader's candour in the words of a celebrated Chriſtian biſhop, who lived in the ſecond century of the church: αλλα απλως και αληθως και ιδιωτικως τα μετα αγαπης σοι γραφεντα, μετα αγαπης συ προσδεξη κ᾽ αυτος; αυξησεις αυτα

veſtigation, ſatisfied one wavering, or fixed one unſettled, ſoul—if I ſhould have convinced one rational inquirer, ſoftened his prejudices, or given him more amiable conceptions of Chriſtianity—or if theſe humble efforts ſhould have furniſhed but the hint to men of much ſuperior diſcernment and abilities to purſue, improve, and perfect the inquiry, I ſhall rejoice that my time hath not been wholly miſemployed, or my labours unſucceſsful.

On the other hand, if ſome thing ſhould be dropped in this treatiſe, of which any peeviſh and diſputatious men may take the advantage, I give them timely notice, (and, I hope, it is not from a ſpirit of timidity, or a conviction that my ſentiments are not founded on truth) that I do not engage to make them a reply.

αυτα παρα σεαυτω, ατε ικανοτερος ημων τυγχανων, οιονει σπερματα και αρχας λαβων παρ' ημων, και εν τω πλατει σε τε νε επι πολυ καρποφορησεις τα δι' ολιγων υφ' ημων ειρημενα ϗ δυνατως παρασησεις τοις μετα σε τα ασθενες υφ' ημων απηγγελμενα. Irenæi. Lib. Adver. Hæres. Præfat. p. 4.

—I would rather addreſs them in the language of St. Paul: " If any man be " contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom, " neither the churches of Chriſt." Religious controverſies are, generally, managed with ſo little temper, liberality, and candour; and the inſolence attending them is, ſo often, and ſo very inſenſibly, transferred from the ſubject to the man, that I would rather decline the unedifying conteſt. Time may be infinitely better employed than in tedious ſophiſtry, private abuſe, or perſonal invective. I am too well acquainted with the delicacy, the abſtruſeneſs, and immenſity of the ſubject in which I have embarked, not to be aſſured that it is capable of many very different conſtructions, and, that men of genius, abilities, and induſtry, may ſhew it in an infinitely pleaſing variety of attitude and light. I am, likewiſe, too ſenſible of my own imperfections, not to believe that others may give a much fuller ſolution to the difficulties it con-

tains; and, I am too well aware of the extravagant partiality which every writer hath for a favourite hypotheſis, and the productions of his own pen, not to be convinced, that, when ſubmitted to the cooler judgment of the public, they may be ſtripped of the glare which dazzles his own eyes, and, of conſequence, unhappily obſcures his diſcernment. I only claim the merit, (if merit it may be called) of having furniſhed a few haſty ſketches of a piece, to which others are at liberty to give the vivid colourings and graces of perfection.

To profeſs myſelf indifferent to the opinion which the world may entertain of this performance, would be the very height of hypocriſy and affectation. Had I poſſeſſed ſuch an apathy as this, I ſhould never, in all probability, have engaged in the preſent undertaking. I candidly acknowledge, that, it would give me conſiderable pleaſure to have pleaſed: at the ſame time, I am ſure that ſuperior motives, if they have not predominated, at leaſt,

leaſt, have incorporated with this natural deſire, and reduced it to a mixture, not of the impureſt kind, which, I think, I can innocently offer to my Judge. Whatever, therefore, may be my ſucceſs in this firſt publication, yet, I can tell the public, with ſome degree of confidence and eaſe, that I am not without ſome private reſources againſt all the united ſeverities of criticiſm, and the rigours of remark. Anxious on the one hand to receive their approbation with gratitude and joy, I truſt that my philoſophy is prepared on the other to encounter with a diſappointment —becauſe I have reſerved, in the aſylum of my heart, ſomething of which no cenſures can rob, or malevolence deprive me— the innocence and purity of a good intention. This will afford me a ſolid conſolation, when laurels and when honours fade, and be more to ſupport me, in my lateſt moments, than the dying, periſhable monuments of fame, or the Hoſannas of the world.

The

The Reader is requeſted carefully to peruſe the notes along with the text, as they throw a conſiderable light upon the ſubject, and have coſt the author infinitely more pains than the compoſition itſelf.

The Author eſteems it but juſtice to acknowledge, that the very learned and ingenious Biſhop of Carliſle's Theory of Religion hath ſuggeſted to him the occaſional conſulting or peruſal of many writers, which have conſiderably facilitated his inquiry, and begs leave to beſpeak the Reader's indulgence for any little errors, which may have crept into any part of this performance, particularly the Latin or Greek quotations, as he himſelf hath been obliged to reſide at a conſiderable diſtance from the metropolis during the whole time of this publication.

DIVINE

DIVINE REVELATION

IMPARTIAL AND UNIVERSAL, &c.

IT was a narrow and ungenerous concluſion of the Jews, that, becauſe they had received "the * oracles of "God," the mercies of heaven were confined to themſelves, and that the reſt of men, whom they branded with the appellation of Aliens and Gentiles, were conſiderably neglected, or ſuperciliouſly overlooked by the governor of the world; that the covenant of circumciſion comprized all the † privileges which omnipotence could beſtow, and that the low and the ignoble ‡ vulgar, not included in its promiſes, were but created

* Rom. iii. 2.

† See Young's Defence of Revelation, Vol. I. p. 315.

‡ Odi profanum vulgus & arceo. Hor.

as ſo many foils to ſet off their perfections. But * "clouds and darkneſs now "no longer reſt" upon this early diſpenſation: the gradually opening page of time, ſince elapſed, hath abundantly evinced their arrogance and their miſtake: in a ſcheme, which once appeared partial in its nature, and confined to a choſen few, nothing is diſcovered by the reviewing eye, but traces of a general equity and kindneſs, an univerſal attention; and though the reſervoir of the divine benignity was originally and *providentially* fixed in Judea, yet the intention of Heaven evidently was, (indeed events have, ſince, confirmed this intention), that many ſalutary ſtreams were to iſſue from that fount, to water the † remoteſt regions of the globe.

* Addiſ. Cato.

† Jenk. Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion. Vol. I. p. 77.

The

The grand deſign of providence in all the ages and countries of the world, whether we, ſpeculatively, reaſon from the attributes of Deity, or take the ſurer authority of experience and facts, muſt have been the diffuſion of *univerſal

* "Becauſe the Jews were preferred to other nations, "as inſtruments of God's providence, they weakly "concluded, that they were the ſole objects of his "regard; and the ſame ſelf-partiality, which led them "ſo much to miſtake the deſign of their law, was the "cauſe of their corrupting it. But in every period of "its exiſtence, they were ſtill ſubſervient to that com- "prehenſive ſcheme of beneficence, which, for want "of reflexion, they did not diſcern; guardians of "that piety, which they neglected, and depoſitaries of "thoſe truths which they refuſed to acknowledge. "Reſident in their own country, they ſerved as exam- "ples and inſtructions to the nations around them. "Captives, or in a ſtate of diſperſion, they carried "with them the knowledge of the true God into the "countries, where they were confined or diſperſed. "Even by rejecting their Redeemer, and in their "preſent ſtate of obduracy and wretchedneſs, they "carry on the ſame plan by ſhewing the wonderful "exactneſs of the prophecies in theſe particulars." Mainwar. Serm. p. 346.

happineſs *and univerſal ſalvation: to promote this comprehenſive, benevolent intention, many circumſtances wonderfully conſpired to render Jeruſalem the moſt convenient receptacle of divine communications, and the deſcendants of the faithful Abraham, the moſt proper, likely, and promiſing inſtruments to publiſh and diffuſe them.

The very peculiar †ſituation of their

* One may ſay with Seneca in this ſenſe, as in all others, "Quis eſt qui non ſenſerit munificentiam Deo-"rum? Nemo eſt expers beneficiorum cœleſtium: ne-"mo eſt, ad quem non aliquid manaverit ex fonte illo "benigniſſimo." Sen. 4. Benef. c. 3, 4.

† The Jews were placed in the middle of the then known world, upon the borders of Aſia, Europe, and Africa, betwixt Ægypt and Arabia, on one hand, and Syria, Chaldæa and Aſſyria on the other; amongſt whom the firſt great kingdoms were erected; and from whence knowledge and learning ſeem to have been derived to the weſtern nations: and they were, alſo, in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, the greateſt emporiums of the world, from whence ſhips went to all parts, and which planted colonies in the moſt diſtant countries. See Lel. Adv. and Neceſſ. of Rev. vol. I. p. 1. c. 19. This note is borrowed from Biſhop Law's Theory of Rel.

country,

country, being nearly in the center of the then known world, from which their knowledge might ſo eaſily be circulated, and ſo generally diffuſed; their * ſtubborn and unſociable temper, as a people, favourable at leaſt to the preſerving of their principles, and † ſecuring them from the almoſt general contagion of ‡ idolatry and ſuperſtition: their natural,

* This feature in their character is acknowledged even by their own hiſtorians, and the Almighty himſelf characterizes them "as a ſtiff-necked and ſtubborn "generation."—Vide Taciti. Hiſt. Lib. 5. de Expeditione Titi.

† "Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts "of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent na-"tions, could ever perſuade the Jews to aſſociate with "the inſtitutions of Moſes, the more elegant mytho-"logy of the Greeks." Gibb. Dec. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Vol. I. c. 15. p. 451. and Tacitus hath a remark much to the ſame purpoſe: "Juſſi a Caio "Cæſare, ejus effigiem in templo locare, arma potius "ſumpſerunt." Taciti Hiſt. Lib. 5. de Exped. Titi. J. Nichols's Conf. with a Theiſt. Part 2. p. 118.

‡ The Jews were the only people in thoſe depraved times, who profeſſed a belief in the true God. See

natural, extreme fidelity to the informations they received, their nice diſtinction and accurate * regiſtry of genealogies and deſcents: their amazing † tenaciouſneſs of ancient rites and cuſtoms; their zeal in gaining over converts to the faith, and, what is moſt of

Young's Defence of Rev. Vol. II. p. 177. and Taciti. Hiſt. Lib. 5.

How very melancholy a picture of the idolatry and ſuperſtition of early ages is drawn us by the authors, who were cotemporary with them. Heſiod, in his time, enumerates τρις μυριοι, thirty-thouſand deities. Heſiod. Oper. & Di. l. 1. p. 250. — In the age of Varro, the Romans had no leſs than three hundred † Jupiters, and thirty thouſand deities of one kind or another, and when Bruxillus, the philoſopher, made his dying ſpeech to the ſenate, they were increaſed to two hundred and eighty thouſand.

* Jenk. Reaſ. of Chriſtian Religion, vol. I. p. 192 193. Joſephus, in his firſt book againſt Apion, ſays, That they had the genealogies of their prieſts then ſtill extant for two thouſand years. See Monſ. Paſcal's Thoughts, c. 7. p. 70, 71, 72, &c.

† See Monſ. Paſc. Thoughts, c. 7. paſſim.

† Tertull. Apolog. c. 14.

all,

all, the * diſperſions they were to ſuffer into all the nations and territories of the world, previouſly manifeſt to that all ſeeing eye, which penetrates the vaſt immenſity of time, and to which "a "† thouſand, nay, ten thouſand years, "are but as yeſterday:" all theſe

* Concerning the almoſt univerſal diſperſion of this unhappy people, ſee all the writers who have treated on the ſubject:—The pious Biſhop Newton upon the Prophecies, vol. I. p. 190—The learned and ingenious Hurd's Diſcourſes—Sir Matthew Hale's Remarks on the Primitive Origination of Mankind, fol. vol. p. 233—The Hiſtory of Joſephus, lib. 7. paſſim.—Deiſm delineated, vol. I. c. 1. p. 33. Worthington's Evidence of Chriſtianity, vol. II. p. 23. "They are, at this day, "(ſays this laſt writer) to be found in all parts of the "world, and in every place and city of note almoſt "through the whole univerſe. They are to be met "with in all Chriſtian, Pagan, and Mahometan coun-"tries, in Europe, Aſia, Africa, and America, though "they have, in their turns, been expelled, one time or "other, almoſt out of them all. They are to be found "in the Eaſt Indies, America, Æthiopia, Ægypt, "Arabia, in the Greek and Ottoman Empires, among "the Tartars, and in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, "and England." Tertull. Apolog. de Judæis, c. 21. —Euſeb. Ecc. Hiſt. lib. 7. c. 16, 17. St. Cyprian de Idol. Vanitate, p. 70. fol. edit.

† Pſal. xc. 4.

were circumſtances, peculiarly favourable for promoting, for extending, * for univerſalizing revelation, and not only acquit the Deity from acting on a narrow ſyſtem of partiality and favour, but forcibly proclaim a moſt † extenſive goodneſs, and wiſdom, and juſtice,

* Their law was likewiſe given to ſtrangers, and thoſe who accompanied them from Ægypt. Deut. xxix. 11, 12, 13. Joſh. viii. 33. 35. Exod. xii. 19. 49. The covenant was alſo made with all Gentiles, who afterwards ſhould become converts to their religion. Deut. xxix. 14, 15. Jenk. vol. I. p. 78. Worth. Eſſays, p. 130. Their prophets propheſied to almoſt all nations, and though the temporal bleſſings of the covenant were confined to them, yet the eſſential one of an heavenly Canaan, of which the other was but a type, extended to people of every nation, "who feared God, and worked "righteouſneſs."

† "In every different communication of his will, "God hath ſtill ſhewn the uniformity of his plan. The "Jews themſelves are no exception to this remark. "The particular diſpenſation, delivered to them, far "from ſuperſeding an univerſal providence, accom-"pliſhed its deſigns, by preparing the way for another "religion, which comprehends all mankind. By ſe-"lecting the Jews, as inſtruments of his providence, "he

juſtice, in the awful revolution. It may further be obſerved that Abraham, the father of the Jewiſh nation, had received the peculiar approbation of heaven for his exemplary virtues: "* I will "make of Abraham a great nation," declares the ſupreme diſpoſer of events: the ſolid and important reaſon is immediately ſubjoined; "† for I know him, "that he will command his houſehold, "and his children after him, that they "may keep the way of the Lord:" he was one indeed of thoſe extraordinary characters to which ſuperior recom-

"he ſhewed his common goodneſs to all, expreſſed in-"deed with a due regard to the claims of the patriarch. "The very terms of the promiſe denoted that the "intended bleſſing did not reſpect him merely as the "progenitor of the Iſraelites, but as the father of the "faithful. The very ſtructure of the ſyſtem is a proof "that it was not particular. Indeed conſidered barely "in itſelf, without a reference to ſome further ſyſtem, "it is a perfect ænigma; but ſurvey it in this con-"nexion and dependency, and all the parts of it are "conſiſtent and regular." Mainw. Serm. p. 85.

* Gen. xii. 2. † Gen. xviii. 19.

penſes

penſes were evidently due: his piety to God was elevated and heroic; his * faith was miraculous; his reſignation unexampled: in vain we look for a rival to his virtues in the preſent or the earlieſt hiſtories of time: they procured him the love and admiration of his cotemporaries, and muſt continue to challenge a peculiar veneration from the lateſt poſterity: his name will be enrolled amongſt the brighteſt ſaints, while ſcripture, or the fainter echoes of tradition, communicate his † actions: when marble hath loſt its monumental honours; and when ſuns ceaſe to ſhine.

In completion, therefore, of that ſacred word, which promiſes "to ‡ ſhew

* Rom. iv. 18.

Biſhop Cumberland hath a very elegant encomium on the character of this illuſtrious Patriarch. Vid. Cumb. de Leg. Patriarch, cap. 4.

Shuckf. Connex. vol. I. b. 5. p. 290. 4to edit.

† Semper honos nomenque tuum laudeſque manebunt. Virg.

‡ Exod. xx. 6.

"mercy

" mercy unto thouſands of them that " love God, and keep his command- " ments," the amiable Patriarch was the inſtrument of bleſſings to many generations. At the ſame time, while individual virtue was thus diſtinguiſhed and rewarded, an amazing ſcheme of mercy was concerted and carrying on, which far from being limited to him or to his ſeed, was pregnant with a peace, an order, and a happineſs to all the various nations, and kingdoms, and communities of men.

That the wonderful ſcheme of the divine benignity was thus general and unconfined, cannot be denied: * that " the " Almighty

* See Locke's ingenious Paraphraſe on the Epiſt. to the Rom. and Dr. Clark, vol. X. ſerm. 5.

" By the conſtitution of the Jewiſh law and govern- " ment, as well as by the providence of God in all his " diſpenſations towards that people, effectual care was " taken that all the neceſſary points of religion, which " concern mankind in general, ſhould, by them, be com- " municated to the reſt of the world." Jenk. Reaſ. Vol. II. pref. p. 32.

" * Almighty was the God, not only of " the Jews, but alſo of the Gentiles," even at the moment of this apparent partiality, is verified by events. It appears very ſtrikingly from the preſent melancholy fate and † diſtreſſes of that people,

Falluntur itaque quotquot religionis Hebraicæ inſtituta, ita anguſtis Palæſtinæ limitibus incluſa fuiſſe arbitrantur ut non eorum cognitio ad alias quoque gentes dimanarit—non fuit ſane in ea opinione Origenes, cujus hæc adverſus Celſum. fol. vol. I. p. 337. verba extant: Και γαρ επρεπε τον ολε τε κοσμε δημιεργον, νομες τεθειμενον ολω τω κοσμω, δυναμιν παρασχειν τοις λογοις, κρατησαι των πανταχε δυναμενην. Witſii Ægyptiac, p. 269.

* Rom. iii. 29.

† Theſe are very pathetically mentioned by all the writers, who have treated of this people. Joſephus obſerves, that no leſs than one hundred and ten thouſand of them periſhed in the ſiege of Jeruſalem by ſword and famine, beſides great numbers in other places, amounting in the whole, according to Archbiſhop Uſher's calculation, to one million three hundred and thirty-ſeven thouſand four hundred and ninety. Worth. Evid. of Chriſt. p. 7. vol. II. diſ. 13. " St. Jerom informs us, " that Adrian made fairs for them, where great multi- " tudes were ſold, ad equi commeatum æſtimati.—He " cauſed

people, and the judgments which at laſt followed their tranſgreſſions. Violated, abuſed mercies entailed on them, (as yet they will on all) the ſevereſt indignation: their puniſhment is now as exemplary as their * privileges were diſtinguiſhed: † compaſſion ſheds its tear on the page which recites their unparallelled diſtreſſes, or when fancy but obtrudes on the

" cauſed them to be brought to open market, and the " ſtated price which he ordered them to be diſpoſed of " for, was four Jews for one buſhel of barley," ibid. They were not allowed even to come within ſight of the city, excepting only for one day in the year, when they were permitted to purchaſe the wretched privilege of ſeeing and bewailing its ruins and devaſtations. Euſeb. Ecc. Hiſt. lib. 3. cap. 6. and Mod. Univer. Hiſt. vol. XIII. b. 11. c. 11. 4to.

For an account of their unparallelled ſufferings, ſee Abp. Tillot. Serm. vol. III. p. 559.—Joſeph. Hiſt. of the Jews, lib. 4. c. 6. — Ancient Univ. Hiſt. vol. IX. and X. paſſim, 4to edit.

* See Grot. on Rom. c. ii. ver. 9. Sicut in privilegiis Judæum præpoſuerat, ſic et eundem præponit in pœnis; id enim exigit ratio, ut qui plus accipit, eo plus crucietur, ſi beneficio non reſponderit.

† " Quis talia fando,
" Myrmidonum, Dolopumve aut duri miles Ulyſei
" Temperet à lacrymis." Virg.

ſympa-

ſympathetic mind the * unwelcome recollection. Deſpiſed, perſecuted, † baniſhed from " ‡ one nation to another, " from one kingdom to another peo- " ple :" || unable to incorporate with any kindred or community; loaded with the injuries and the § contempt of

* Animus meminiſſe horret luctuque refugit. Virg.

† Voltaire's Works, vol. XXII. p. 188.

‡ Pſal. cv. 13.

How juſtly applicable to this wretched people is that remark which Æneas makes of himſelf, Quæ regio in terris noſtri non plena laboris :—" At this very day " (ſays even the captious Voltaire) they are vaga- " bonds on the earth, and deteſted by the reſt of man- " kind, though they are ſo confident that the heaven " and the earth were created for them alone." Volt. works, vol. XII. p. 14.

|| What a remarkable interpoſition of providence againſt this people took place in our own country, ſo late as the year 1750, when the bill for their naturalization had actually paſſed, and yet was ſo amazingly over-ruled by the univerſal cries and murmurs of the people. See Volt. works, vol. XXII. p. 189. Goldſ. Hiſt. of Eng. vol. IV. p. 340.

§ Tacitus, lib. 5.

all ;

all, and ſtill, as it were, * *miraculouſly* exiſting, when multitudes of the nations, which infeſted and purſued them, are exterminated and deſtroyed, they ſeem to be juſt in that extremity of anguiſh, when nature pants and ſighs for diſſolution, but cannot poſſibly attain it: † obliged to drag on a miſerable exiſtence,

* Worth. Evid. of Chriſtian. vol. II. p. 26, 27. "The Biſhop of Meaux, in his Univerſal Hiſtory, obſerves a remarkable inſtance of divine providence "in preſerving this people ſo much longer than any of "thoſe who conquered and enſlaved them, viz. The "Aſſyrians, Medes, Greeks, and Romans: with other "reaſons of this extraordinary diſpenſation, he aſſigns the following, viz. That, hereby, we may "find, in unſuſpected hands, thoſe very ſcriptures, "which foretell both the blindneſs and unhappineſs of "theſe ſame Jews." See Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. XIII. 4to p. 124.—Spect. vol. VII. No. 495.

† "Had the Jews been all converted by Jeſus "Chriſt, we ſhould only have had doubtful witneſſes; and had they been *quite* deſtroyed, we ſhould "have had none at all." Paſcal's Tho. p. 194. And another writer remarks very forcibly, "Per omnes "gentes diſperſi ſunt Judæi, teſtes iniquitatis ſuæ et "veritatis

ence, to be at once * ſo many ſpecimens of the divine authority, juſtice, and diſpleaſure for neglected opportunities, and ſo many living and convincing witneſſes of the force, and truth, and divinity of † the Chriſtian revelation.

The

" veritatis noſtræ. Ipſi habent codices, de quibus pro-
" phetatus eſt Chriſtus, et nos tenemus Chriſtum. Et
" ſi forte aliquando aliquis paganus dubitaverit, cum
" ei dixerimus prophetias de Chriſto, quarum eviden-
" tiam obſtupeſcit, et admirans putaverit à nobis eſſe
" conſcriptas, de codicibus Judæorum probamus, quia
" hoc totum ante prædictum eſt: videte quemadmo-
" dum de inimicis noſtris alios confundimus inimicos."

* Monſ. Paſcal's Thoughts, c. vii. p. 73. and c. xxviii.—" So that we have now a people, who, of all " mankind, can be leaſt ſuſpected of partial favour " towards us, thus lending their aſſiſtance to ſupport " our cauſe, and by the zeal which they ſhew for " their law and their prophets, preſerving with the " moſt exact fidelity our evidences, and their own " condemnation. Paſcal's Thoughts, c. x.

† The envenomed wit of the profane Voltaire is but employed to diſplay its own inſufficiency, by attempting to invalidate the force of ſcripture in this awful diſpenſation. His endeavouring to diſcover any traces of reſemblance betwixt the Jews, and the Parſes

and

The humane, benevolent Redeemer of the world continually oppoſed, by his converſation and inſtructions amongſt his countrymen, this narrow and oppreſſive ſyſtem of ſentiment and faith: he endeavoured to convince them, ſo far as their pride and prejudices would permit, that men of every country ſhould equally participate, in proportion, at leaſt, to their moral preparation for them, in the mercies and the benefits of redeeming love: that the Almighty, though apparently the patron of but few, was equally the tender parent of the world; that, as the grand providential plan more viſibly un-

and Banians, is but a teſtimony how weak infidelity is when driven to its laſt reſources. Admitting his account of theſe people for authentick, though, in many inſtances his aſſertions are certainly equivocal, yet, were they ever, like the Jews, diſperſed and diſſeminated over all the world? Have they ever ſuffered their trials or revolutions? Or, whatever peculiarities may exiſt in ſuch a people, yet have theſe peculiarities ever been foretold? See Volt. works, vol. XXII. Diſc. upon the Jews.

folded, it would appear, that he acted from no motives of partiality, or prejudice, or diſtinction: there would then be "* neither Jew nor Gentile, Barba-" rian, Scythian, bond or free," excluded from his mercies, any further than † infidelity or an immoral life might

* Gal. iii. 28.

† It is a favourite notion amongſt free-thinkers, that unbelief can have nothing criminal in its nature, and that no one can be cenſurable, much leſs to be condemned, for not aſſenting to particular articles or doctrines concerning which his reaſon and his judgment are not fully convinced. There is ſomething very plauſible in this aſſertion, but a dangerous fallacy is involved in it. "Latet anguis in herba."—The Almighty hath given to every candid and well diſpoſed mind ſufficient and inconteſtable evidence of the truths of the goſpel. As the Revealer was a being of infinite perfections, he certainly knew what degree of teſtimony was neceſſary to the conviction of his intelligent creatures. Many extraordinary miracles have alſo been wrought to proclaim and confirm the Chriſtian religion. Its internal evidence likewiſe is ſo ſtrong and convincing, that (I mean) ariſing from the hopes it inſpires, the purity, refinement, and excellence of its injunctions, the wonderful mode in which it was propagated, and the diſintereſted

might ſerve to exclude them: that though for reaſons, which expanding time

diſintereſted views of our Lord and his diſciples, (ſee Soame Jenyns on the Internal Evid. of the Chriſt. Rel.) that the ſerious inquirer ſeems really inexcuſable for withholding his aſſent, and even his adoring gratitude from ſuch a noble inſtitution. And whatever candour ſceptics may pretend, the two great and general ſources of infidelity amongſt us are, either that pride and arrogance of underſtanding, which wiſh to be diſtinguiſhed by ſingularity of ſentiments, and differing from the herd, or that indulgence of ſome criminal propenſities and appetites which flies for a refuge into the gloomy ſhades of doubt or unbelief. "How can ye "believe, which receive honour one of another?" is a charge which expoſtulates with men of the firſt deſcription: and to the latter are very applicable the words of the apoſtle: "For every one that doeth evil "hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt "his deeds ſhould be reproved." See the Biſhop of Lond. Paſt. Let. the learned and ingenious Hurd's Diſc. upon theſe words, "How can ye believe, which "receive honour one of another?"—Tillot. Ser. fol. vol. II. Diſ. 33. p. 238.—Sherlock. vol. III. Diſc. 14 and 15. There are ſome excellent remarks upon this ſubject in Nicholls's Conf. with a Theiſt. Part 4th, p. 213.—See further, the preſent Biſhop of Worceſter's Diſc. upon theſe words, "If our goſpel be hid, it is hid

time would abundantly explain, the deſcendants of Abraham had hitherto enjoyed

" to them that are loſt."—The cauſes of unbelief are there laid open with ſuch a maſterly diſcrimination, ſuch a force of argument, and ſuch an elegance of language, as I ſcarcely remember ever to have met with in any other writer. This excellent prelate, who does ſuch infinite honour to his mitre, hath all the zeal and orthodoxy of any, even of his primitive predeceſſors; embelliſhed with the graces of modern cultivation; enriched with the accumulated learning of ages; and ſtrengthened with the accuracy of deep inveſtigation. The more, in ſhort, I peruſe the writings of this amiable man, the more I am ſurprized with that aſſemblage of talents which they continually diſplay. The truths of revelation are the baſis of his reſearches: to theſe he makes his abilities ſubſervient; on theſe he laviſhes the claſſical embelliſhments of Athens and of Rome, and the ſuperſtructure which he raiſes from theſe different materials is order, and beauty, and ſymmetry itſelf.

Even a Gibbon, for whoſe talents I entertain the greateſt veneration, muſt admire, as he reads, and bluſh at his own ſcepticiſm and preſumption.

What a contraſt there appears betwixt theſe two different characters, ariſing from the uſes to which they have put their reſpective endowments. The writings of the one will be ſecuring Chriſtian principle, while Chriſtianity

joyed national advantages, and ſuperior diſtinctions, yet the period would approach, fixed as it was in the councils of providence, when theſe temporary privileges ſhould be infinitely more diſſeminated, and theſe bleſſings rendered even univerſal: * When "the earth ſhould "be filled with the knowledge of the "Lord, as the waters cover the ſeas." "† Other ſheep I have, which are not of "this fold, them alſo I muſt bring with "me, and they ſhall hear my voice, and "there ſhall be one fold and one ſhep-"herd."

Chriſtianity is known or remembered in the world; the elegant and poliſhed periods of the other may be a ſource of miſchief, while hiſtory is read, or elegance admired. The firſt, endowed with a penetrating genius, thinks it no diſgrace to make his reaſon bow to divine revelation, and his genius ſubmit to the evidences of the goſpel. The other hath oppoſed the feeble, glimmering lamp of human abilities and human reaſon to the ſtrong meridian light and ſplendors of the goſpel. Reader, "Thy bane and antidote are both before thee."

* Iſai. xi. 9. † John x. 16.

It is a lamentable obſervation which the modern Theologian is obliged to make, that theſe Jewiſh, ſelfiſh, and unſocial prejudices are not yet overcome. They ſubſiſt with ſome even in this age of inquiry and information. I mean not an alluſion to thoſe deceived reaſoners, who ſuppoſe the Deity to have ſelected *ſome from

* "Amid the many illuſtrious ſpecimens" (ſays an ingenious writer) "with which we are favoured of the "free grace and univerſal love of God, is it not "aſtoniſhing, that men ſhould ever entertain ſuch "narrow and unworthy conceptions of his divine ad-"miniſtration, as to confine it to a few individuals of "the human race; and thus to degrade the Maker "and Lord of the univerſe to the rank of a mere "local and tutelary deity? The volume of nature, "the volume of the goſpel, and the volume of our "own hearts, if we had but eyes to ſee them, lie "equally unfolded to our view: in each of theſe we "may read, in the faireſt and largeſt characters, theſe "great and glorious truths, that the God of Abra-"ham, of Iſaac, of Jacob, the God of the Iſraelites, "the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, is the "God and Father of the ſpirits of all fleſh; that he "hath made of one blood all nations under heaven; "that

from the multitudes of men for his favourites and ſaints, while by a ſtrange prerogative of cruelty, he hath reprobated all the reſt; who talk ſo arrogantly of his ſovereign will and pleaſure, independent of his juſtice, and place him on a throne, from which indeed ſome partial rays of benignity are darted, but which, generally, muſt be infeſted with the ſighs and groans of * millions of his creatures,

" that his tender mercies are over all his works; that " he is no reſpecter of perſons, but in every nation, he " that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs, is ac- " cepted of him." Duché's Diſc. vol. II. p. 81.

* Amongſt all the opinions which have thrown ſo dark a cloud over the amiable and chearful features of Chriſtianity, this is certainly one of the worſt, and pregnant with moſt dreadful conſequences to mankind: it offers ſuch a violence to the attributes of God; it ſo immediately contracts the heart, and ſours the diſpoſition; it maims, ſo very dreadfully, the grand and univerſal appointments of heaven; and hath, in its compoſition, ſuch a tincture of barbariſm, cruelty, and ignorance; it foſters, in one view, ſuch a dreadful preſumption, and, in another, ſuch a dark and abſolute deſpair, that, perhaps, its profeſſors poſſeſs a de-

creatures, whom he hath brought without their conſciouſneſs, and without their

gree of perſecuting acrimony, which the Romiſh church herſelf, in this age of knowledge, civilization, and refinement ſcarcely could avow.

Of the ravages it would ſpread, if left to itſelf, we have had ſome recent and very melancholy proofs. The diſturbances which, in the courſe of the year 1780, threatened the metropolis and the eſtabliſhed church, committed ſo many houſes to the flames, and the more irretrievable records and obſervations of a * man whom the diſpaſſionate conſider with the higheſt veneration, probably originated in this horrid ſuperſtition. The outrages and inſults offered to many amiable and very diſtinguiſhed characters in † Scotland, whom literature ranks amongſt her faireſt ornaments, and ſucceeding ages will neceſſarily revere, at the time, when ſome little indulgencies in favour of the Papiſts were under agitation, had their riſe in this ſame exterminating creed; and the perfidious cruelty which ‡ Calvin, the very leader of this ſect, practiſed on the honeſt and diſtinguiſhed § Servetus, in cauſing him even to be burned at a ſtake, have fixed an opprobrious ſtigma on the principles of this people, which, not all their pretended piety, and zeal, and exactneſs, will be able to remove.

* The Earl of Mansfield. † Dr. Robertſon, Prin. of the Univ. of Edinb. and others. ‡ See Volt. Works, vol. IV. c. 113. and Biog. Dic. Article, Calvin. § See Moſ. Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 260.

conſent,

conſent, into a miſerable being, only to decorate the triumphs of his cruelty, in an eternity of woe: theſe are errors of too palpable a nature, in an age of diſcernment, to need refutation: the philoſophick mind ſmiles at the idea, while humanity, touched in her fineſt nerves, ſhudders at the blaſphemy or the enthuſiaſm of thoſe, who ever could maintain ſo bigotted a creed. Nor yet are theſe remarks levelled at ſuch as uncharitably confine the mercies of the Deity to their own peculiar church, or ſect, or perſuaſion: the firſt dictate of reaſon ſo forcibly militates againſt this ſelfiſh doctrine, that to overthrow it, there needs nothing but the evidence of intuition. I am rather, in the courſe of all theſe obſervations, alluding to thoſe ſceptical and diſputatious men, who have argued on a conſiderably larger ſcale, though with equally miſtaken notions of the goſpel; and * becauſe ſo long a ſpace elapſed before

* Of this complexion were Porphyry, Celſus, Chubb, The author of Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, The

fore Chriſtianity was firſt communicated to the world, and becauſe, comparatively ſo few nations, ſtill, are bleſſed with its light, have preſumptuouſly concluded, that the * Almighty is partial in his

The author of Deiſm fairly ſtated, Collins, Bayle, Shafteſbury, Bolingbroke, and many others, who ſtood very high in the liſts of infidelity—ſuch at preſent are —" a great multitude, which no man can number."

* " Do you think" (ſays the animated Duché) " the " ſavage that roams the howling wilderneſs is deſtitute " of his paſtoral care? Do you imagine that the cloud " of ignorance and error, with which he is enveloped, " conceals him from his Father's penetrating eye? No " —the heavenly ray frequently darts through the ob- " ſtructing medium: the cœleſtial manna drops like " ſilent dew, to cool the fiery ſoil of nature; the " grim viſage of the painted warrior is changed into " more than female ſoftneſs; the tear of ſympathy " ſtarts through the reluctant eye-lids, and the man, " yea, the angel, ſhines through the brute. O Shep- " herd of Iſrael! are not theſe then of thy fold? Are " not theſe alſo thy children, nouriſhed by thy heavenly " food, and ſometimes manifeſting thy own ſweet and " heavenly tempers? Haſten, O haſten, the happy " time, when theſe wandering ſheep ſhall be gathered " to the flock; and they, with us, ſhall know and " feel, that we are all but one fold, belonging to one " and the ſame heavenly Shepherd." vol. II. p. 51.

dealings

dealings with mankind, and that ſtill few can be ſaved. But under every age and under every diſpenſation, the univerſal Shepherd hath had ſheep, not *externally* of that fold, "which hereafter he will "bring with him," and though not viſibly guided by his preſence, * ſupported by his crook, browſing in the "greeneſt paſtures," or "led beſide the "ſtill waters of comfort;" yet ſuch, as, at the general conſummation of all things, he will acknowledge for his own, and admit into the "† one and univerſal fold, "under Chriſt Jeſus the righteous."

To obviate, therefore, as much as poſſible the ſcepticiſm of ſome; to diſſipate the apprehenſions and the doubts of others; to eaſe the tender conſciences and ſenſibilities of a third ſet of men; to give Chriſtianity its proper aſpect, as intending general univerſal ſalvation; "to ‡ juſtify the ways of God to man,"

* Pſal. xxiii. † John x. 16. ‡ Pope's Eſſay on Man.

in

in every time and mode of communicating divine light, and to clear him from aſperſions of partiality or injuſtice; I ſhall endeavour, in the ſequel of theſe remarks, to prove that his mercies never have been, are not ſtill, confined to any peculiar age, or people, or *nation of the world;

* Nicholls, in his conference with a Theiſt, argues very clearly to juſtify the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God in ſelecting the Jews for his peculiar people, if we were not even able to diſcover ſo many ſtriking and important reaſons for ſuch a diſpenſation. "There "are a thouſand inſtances in providence to be adduced, "which are ſubject to the ſame difficulties. Tell me "why the unhappy inhabitants of Greenland and "Iceland are not all born in ſuch a garden of the "world as Italy? Or why God beſtowed ſuch a delicious "ſoil upon the Italians only, above all the reſt of the "Europeans? Tell me why God hath bleſſed you with "a more delicate perſonage and a happier ſtock of "natural parts than your neighbours? Why ſuch an "one is born to a great eſtate, and others to none at all? "Why ſuch an one is made a man, not a monkey? "Why another thing is an animal, and not a tree? "Now theſe are all particular favours of God Almighty, "which other parts of the creation want, and yet you "will not ſay that this is any reflexion upon the wiſ-"dom

world; that reaſon itſelf can diſcover many cauſes for the mode in which revelation hath been given, and that more may poſſibly be concealed from us, in a

" dom or juſtice of God! Why therefore ſhould we " tax them in beſtowing this favour of particular reve- " lation to the Jews? For I dare ſay I can as eaſily " prove, that the Jews were as much deſerving of their " prophecy, as any man can be to be an Italian, or an " Engliſhman, or beautiful, or wealthy. We men " are not able to give a reaſon for any of theſe benefits, " and therefore muſt refer all to the ευδοκια, or good " pleaſure of God. Not that this good pleaſure is any " capricious reſolution of him, but a wiſe determi- " nation of his will, grounded upon juſt reaſon, al- " though unknown to us. Nay, I doubt not but we " men, in another world, ſhall be able to give an ac- " count of many difficulties in God's beneficent and " vindictive providence, which, in this world, are ſo " apt to amaze us, and that in the great circles and " revolutions of God's future diſpenſations, all the " preſent inequalities ſhall be made up, and all accounts " balanced." Conf. with a Theiſt, part 2. p. 115.

We are inflamed (ſays an incomparable writer) with a deſire of piercing through all things, and of " build- " ing a tower," the top of which ſhall reach to infinity. But our feeble edifice cracks and falls, the earth opens without bottom under us, and buries our devices in its gulph. Monſ. Paſc. Thoughts, c. 23. p. 192.

ſtate,

ſtate, at beſt, but of *glimmering conjecture, which human penetration is not able to diſcern; "† the knowledge of "which may be infinitely too wonder-"ful and excellent for us: we cannot "attain unto it."

A degree of difficulty will always attend ſuch abſtracted inquiries: probable ſuppoſition ſometimes muſt be uſed to ſupply the place of certain information: travelling through a country, as yet ſo unknown, which the light of the ſun ‡ irradiates ſo very little, and where the night is ſo long, a cloud will always hang on our beſt inveſtigations, or the taper, which we take to direct us through its devious, § ſolitary windings, ſometimes may miſlead us: there will neceſſarily be ſomething myſterious and amazing in

* Lumenque obſcura viciſſim
Luna premit. Virg. Æn. 4. v. 80.

† Pſal. cxxxix.

‡ Sed nox atra caput triſti circumvolat umbra. Virg.

§ Rara per occultos ducebat ſemita calles. Virg.

the

the ways of heaven, when we * attempt to ſound them by the narrow line of the human underſtanding: " touching the " † Almighty we cannot find him out:" " his ‡ ways are in the ſea, and his paths " in the deep waters, and his footſteps

* How noble and elevated to this purpoſe is that ſentiment in the book of Eccleſiaſticus: " No heart can " think upon theſe things worthily, and who is able " to conceive his ways? It is a tempeſt which no man " can ſee, for the moſt part of his works are hid: " who can declare the works of his juſtice, or who " can endure them: for his covenant is afar off, and the " trial of all things is in the end," chap. xvi. ver. 20. Conformable to this ſcriptural declaration is that idea of the elegant and learned author of Ganganelli's Letters: " There will be always an impenetrable cloud " betwixt God and man, till the moment of eter- " nity." Vol. I. letter 65.

The ways of heaven are dark and intricate,
Puzzled in mazes, and perplex'd with errors;
Our underſtanding traces them in vain,
Loſt and bewilder'd in the fruitleſs ſearch,
Nor ſees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confuſion ends.

Addiſ. Cato.

See Scripture Vindicated, in Anſwer to Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation—Rem. on Geneſ. part 1. p. 21.

† Job xxxvii. 23. ‡ Pſal. lxxvii. 19.

" are

" are not known:" it was not, certainly, the intention of his providence, that in the preſent ſtate, our faculties ſhould be equal to * compleat inveſtigation, nor our

* " God communicates himſelf to us in part, but " ſtill reſerves to himſelf the right of abſolute domi- " nion, becauſe there is nothing but what is truly ſub- " ject to him. If he clearly manifeſted his deſigns to " us here below, if the myſteries, which aſtoniſh and " confound us, were laid open to our view, we " ſhould have that intuitive ſight, which he reſerves " till after this life, and death would then be unneceſ- " ſary:" " I ſhall know as alſo I am known:" yet we " would anticipate that moment without reflecting, " that every thing is regulated by infinite wiſdom, and " that we have nothing to do on our part, but to ſub- " mit and adore." Gangan. Let. vol. II. l. 119. " The more exalted (obſerves an able writer) the " matters in any revelation are, the more they muſt ex- " ceed the limits of our underſtanding. The goſpel, " like the reſt of the revealed ſyſtems, indeed like " that of nature itſelf, contains unſurmountable dif- " ficulties. And thus the great leading principle, " which preſented itſelf at our firſt ſetting out, and, " like a friendly ſtar, hath appeared, at intervals, to " regulate our courſe, meets us again, at the laſt ſtage " of our journey. The ſame trial of our faith; the " ſame devout ſubmiſſion of our reaſon to divine au- " thority

our faith ſuperſeded by the certainty of demonſtration, and though it would therefore be infinite preſumption to expect an entire diſcovery of his councils, or to pry into all the ſecrets of his will; yet, ſtill an attempt, while managed with ſubmiſſion, to explain the wiſdom, propriety, and juſtice of the modes in which they have been manifeſted to us, is but a proper and religious exerciſe of thoſe ſuperior faculties with which he hath endowed his intelligent creation. At leaſt whilſt * Infidelity employs ſuch able hands

" thority ſtill ſubſiſts, and for ever muſt, notwithſtand-
" ing our eager deſire to penetrate myſteries, which
" angels are not permitted to look into." Mainwaring's Serm. p. 348. See Biſhop Butler's Div. Anal. c. 2. p. 31.

* It is really a circumſtance much to be lamented that the taſte of our moſt faſhionable and admired writers is marked with ſuch traits of ſcepticiſm and unbelief. I am not alluding to thoſe diſtinguiſhed geniuſes, who, in the earlier periods of this century, or the concluſion of the laſt, unhinged the faith and principles of many with their pernicious inſinuations: a Bolingbroke, a Shafteſbury, a Hobbes, a Tindal, a

hands to demoliſh or to maim the beauteous, venerable pile of the goſpel, it appears

Collins, or a Bayle: let them, for me, with their frailties or their virtues, lie undiſturbed in the grave. "Sit "illis terra levis." It is not neceſſary to harrow up the aſhes of theſe great deceaſed, in order to be furniſhed with abundant teſtimonies of the misfortune and evil I am now lamenting. Writers of this dark, unhappy complexion ſwarm amongſt us, even at the preſent day. And the misfortune is, that many of them are poſſeſſed of ſuch ſhining talents, as ſerve to circulate their opinions through the world, and render the poiſon, which they ſpeciouſly have adminiſtered, almoſt univerſal. How gladly would one except from ſuch a charge as this the forcible, the elegant, the penetrating Hume, or a living and deſervedly celebrated hiſtorian, who, in his beautiful and flowing periods, at once hath ſpread a banquet of the higheſt entertainment for the taſte of youth, and ſentiments, which may corrupt and faſcinate that taſte even to the lateſt times. I am not inſenſible of what is the adduced ſpecious plea for this religious ſingularity. It is urged that the great illuminations of ſcience, and the progreſs of improvement in all the arts, have ſo expanded every faculty of the human underſtanding, that men no longer will take up with equivocal appearances or inſufficient demonſtration. A ſtrong adherence, however, to the ſentiments of revelation, hath not been the mere characteriſtick diſtinction of the ignorant and uninformed.

It

pears but the duty of its miniſters and guardians to counteract, if poſſible, their inſidious

It hath diſtinguiſhed; it hath *adorned* many of the greateſt men, whom this country may be proud in boaſting for its own. It ſhone with the moſt conſpicuous ſplendour in a Bacon, in a Boyle, in a Newton, in a Locke, a Littleton, an Addiſon, and in many other men to whom nature had imparted her moſt valuable treaſures, and whom ſcience had enriched with her deepeſt mines of intellectual improvement. Theſe men were, at once, monuments of genius, and a ſublime, modeſt, acquieſcing devotion, and united the greateſt luſtre of literary fame, with an humble, a profound, an unſhaken veneration for the doctrines of the croſs. Is it not then a truer reaſon for our preſent libertiniſm in religious ſentiment, that the depraved and relaxed ſyſtem of our virtues, requires an equally relaxed mode of thinking on divine ſubjects, and wiſhes to expunge ſuch articles of faith as are not to be reconciled with our unhappy practices, or ſoothing to our crimes. Another circumſtance, which may have had its effect in vitiating the taſte of our preſent writers, and ſpreading the leaven of infidelity amongſt us, is our amazing fondneſs for the writings and productions of our neighbours on the continent. For many years paſt we have diſplayed a particular rage for the cuſtoms of that nation, and wiſhed to graft their lively, volatile, and ſentimental taſte on the more ſolid ſtock of Engliſh thoughtfulneſs and accurate inveſtigation. Their favourite authors, it

inſidious manœuvres, to cement, to ſtrengthen, or to rebuild the parts, which have

is known, are looſe in their opinions: an Helvetius, a Voltaire, and a Raynal, whoſe works are now tranſlated into moſt modern languages, almoſt univerſally read, and as univerſally admired, have endeavoured to build a monumental fame upon the ruins of moſt of the capital doctrines and revelations of the ſcriptures. In them, however, ſuch a ſpirit of ſcepticiſm admits of infinitely more alleviation, than it does with ourſelves. Their national religion, founded in abſurdity, gives ſome little ſoftening to the ſevere imputation, which otherwiſe they might deſerve. The extreme of ſuperſtition, as is generally the caſe, with them hath produced the very oppoſite extreme of infidelity or doubt. Men of liberal and enlarged minds, diſguſted with the tyranny, grimace, and ſuperſtitions of the Romiſh church, have haſtily enliſted themſelves under the banners of unbelief, and concluded all religion to be only an intereſted tale of the prieſt, or ſome cunning and political contrivance of ſuperiors for governing the ſtate. Their conſtitutional levity and natural diſſipation have foſtered the perſuaſion. The ſentiment, therefore, is conſiderably national: it hath, conſequently, ſtamped the taſte of the nation; and whatever is the national taſte will, always, give the ton and complexion to a † writer, who either conſults emoluments by his productions, or only ſeeks the leſs ſubſtantial recompence of fame and diſtinction.

† Gangan. vol. I. l. 13. p. 54.

How

have moſt been attacked, and reſtore it, if they can, to its original ſymmetry, and order, and perfection.

As to the late publication of Chriſtianity, and the alledged darkneſs of the intervening times, many arguments preſent themſelves to our very firſt inquiries, which, inſtead of impeaching, forcibly diſplay the wiſdom of the Deity in this particular inſtance, and hint the heavenly motive to have been univerſal love.

While men are conſtituted with free agency and choice, the Almighty muſt deal with them according to the laws of

How extremely cautious, on the other hand, were ancient virtuous ſtates of tolerating any ſpirit of infidelity amongſt them.

Cum Protagoras in principio cujuſdam libri poſuiſſet ſe dubitare an Dii eſſent, juſſu Athenienſium exterminatus eſt ex urbe eorum atque agro, librique ejus combuſti ſunt in concione. Ferunt quoque talentum argenti fuiſſe propoſitum præmium ei, qui illum occidiſſet. Sic *etiam dubitatio* de Diis non potuit pœnam effugere. Sen. Epiſ. 117.—Cicer. 2. de Nat. n. 68. De Nat. n. 29. 63.

their being and endowments. He † cannot force upon them an involuntary creed, or an involuntary practice: this would

† Many people entertain the ſtrangeſt and moſt abſurd ideas of Omnipotence. It hath, they ſay, no limits or obſtructions. The Deity, they further urge, can do what he pleaſes, and prevent all unhappy, diſagreeable events. I entertain, with them, the higheſt veneration for the Deity's almighty power. But then this Omnipotence was intended to be diſplayed in the regular ſtated appointments of Providence, and in the conſtant unvarying wonders of creation. It appears from the very curious contrivance, forms and motions of the planetary ſyſtem, not in the perpetual working of miracles, or the cauſing of alterations to accelerate or retard them. It conſiſts in forming man a rational free agent, and, afterwards, leaving him to the ſtated laws and appointments of his creation, and not in obliging him, contrary to thoſe laws, to any particular neceſſary mode of thinking, or of action. It conſiſts in making the various ranks of vegetable, animal, rational creatures exactly what they are, and not in any uncommon methods of altering their nature, or unhinging their conſtitution. It conſiſts, in ſhort, according to the ſentiment of an acute and very diſtinguiſhing reaſoner, not in making a circle to be a ſquare, or a ſquare to be a circle, but having formed them, as they are, with their peculiar natures, properties, and perfections.

be annihilating the very privilege he had beſtowed, and tarniſhing the luſtre of his rational * creation: on ſuch a ſyſtem, indeed, men might not deviate, as they do, into errors and abſurdities, but they would then be but a kind of ſuperior † machines, impelled by a blind uniformity

* Ubi autem homini nihil plane ſpontaneitatis relinquitur, ibi non ipſe homo, ſed qui eidem neceſſitatem adfert, auctor habebitur actionis ad quam homo invitus membra vireſque ſuas accommodat. Puff. De Ac. Hum. c. 1. p. 127.

† That irreſiſtible grace maintained by the abettors of predeſtination, which leaves no room for choice or free agency in man, originates in this abſurd idea of Omnipotence. We might, it is true, have been created thus mechanical, and governed by ſome principle, ſimilar to that eſtabliſhed over matter, gravitation, and attraction. Predeſtination, then, would have implied no inconſiſtency. Will could not be ſaid to have ſo much as exiſted, and reaſon muſt have been a ſuperfluous diſtinction. Inſtinct, like the needle true to the compaſs, might alone have pointed out the circle of our actions. But from the moment we were formed with the powers we poſſeſs, the omnipotence of Deity, acting in conſiſtency with its eſtabliſhed laws, could not alter or unhinge, or arbitrarily influence an intelligent, free, and rational creature.

mity of action, not liable to puniſhment for an immoral life, nor capable of retribution

From the ſame undigeſted conceptions of the attributes of God, have proceeded the embarraſſments, which have perplexed the world, concerning the original permiſſion of evil. If free creatures were to form a part of this ſyſtem, diſorder and confuſion of many kinds muſt be a neceſſary conſequence. The Deity ſeems juſtified, if greater good than evil ariſes from the whole, or if ſome providential expedients, hereafter, ſhould be fixed on to do away the preſent miſeries of ſin. Methods, of which we cannot form a conception, may probably exiſt. Immured in this houſe of clay, it ſcarcely is becoming us to hazard a ſingle conjecture on the ſubject.

In this view of things the predeſtination of the ſcriptures is already underſtood, and may be reconciled with all the attributes of God. The Almighty foreſees by one intuitive glance, what will be the diſpoſitions and actions of the infinite numbers of his intelligent creatures to the end of the world. Where, therefore, there is virtue diſcernible in embryo, and where the free will and the reaſon he hath given, are foreſeen to be diſpoſed for the influences of his grace, the amiable poſſeſſors of ſuch hearts as theſe he predeſtinates or elects. Thus it is ſaid of St. Paul, that he was "ſet apart "from his mother's womb for the goſpel of Chriſt:" it was foreſeen by the all-penetrating eye of God, that his heart, in ſome particular period of his life, would be happily diſpoſed for receiving, propagating, and diffuſing

tribution even for the pureſt. Virtue and vice, indeed, could then be only names, ſubſiſt-

diffuſing this goſpel; and therefore he was ſet apart, as every other perſon would have been, in whom there had appeared ſimilar diſpoſitions.

It may further be aſked: nay, it hath been aſked, Why then he created any man with a foreknowledge that he would be a ſinner; why a Judas to be the betrayer of his bleſſed Son; a Peter his denier; or the Jews to act the horrid tragedy of his crucifixion? The purpoſes of his providence muſt be completed—of theſe we cannot, adequately judge, till the veil is removed from theſe eyes of fleſh, till mortality is ſwallowed up of life, and we are able to comprehend, in one connected view, the plan of his adminiſtration in that immenſity of worlds, which, probably, he hath created, and their entire connexion with and dependence on each other. We muſt wait till the general conſummation of all things to ſee his providential government adequately cleared, and ſhining in its fulleſt ſplendours of propriety and wiſdom. Thus much is certain, even at the preſent, that his foreknowledge had no influence upon the vices of their characters. Theophylact. in his Comm. on the viiith of Rom. ver. 29. hath ſome ſentiments, which may throw a degree of light on this intereſting ſubject, Προεγινωσκει ο Θεος τυς αξιυς της κλησεως, ειθ ιτως προοριζει. Προτερα ουν η προγνωσις, ειτα ο προορισμος. Προορισμον δε νοησεις το αμεταθετον τυ Θευ ανα θον θελημα. Προεγνω ουν οτι ο Παυλος οξιος της κλησεως τυ ευαγγελιυ

ſubſiſting in the cells of ideal ſpeculation: the world would loſe its character of

ευαγγελιȣ, κι ȣτω προωρισε, τȣτεςιν, αμεταθετωςωρισε, κι εςησε το καλεσαι αυτον. Συμμορφȣς ȣν ποιει της εικονος τȣ υιȣ αυτȣ, ȣς προγινωσκει οξιȣς. Theophylact. Comm. in Romanos. Cap. viii. ver. 29.

Juſtin Martyr is perhaps more plain and explicit upon the occaſion. A perſon of enquiry, or an enemy to the goſpel is introduced as aſking, Ει το προσαπτειων τω Χριςω αγνοιαν εςιν ασεβες, δηλον οτι παντων εχει τελειαν την προγνωσιν. Πως ουν ȣκ εςιν αιτιος της τȣ Ιȣδα προδοσιας κι της τȣ Πετρȣ αρνησεως, οταυτα μεν προγνους, μη κωλυσας δε; κι περι της τȣ διαβολȣ ϗ τȣ πρωτοπλαςȣ απο τȣ Θεȣ ἐκπτωσεως, ο αυτος λογος αρμοσειεν.

Αποκρισις ———

Ει εδει τον Χριςον δι ενος των αυτȣ μαθητων παραδοθηναι, ἱνα η γραφη πληρωθη, δηλονοτι αιτιος εςιν ο Χριςος της εκπληρωσεως της γραφης ϗ ȣ της προδοσιας τȣ Ιȣδα. Ταυτης γαρ αυτος ο Ιȣδας ην αιτιος. ην μελλȣσαν ο Θεος προειδως, προειπε δια της γραφης· ϗ ȣκ εςιν ηπρογνωσις αιτια τȣ μελλοντος εσεσθαι, αλλα το μελλον εσεσθαι αιτιον Της προγνωσεως: ȣ γαρ τη προγνωσει επεται το μελλον, αλλα τω μελλοντι η προγνωσις. Και ȣδαμως ο προγινωσκων αιτιος εςιν τȣ μελλοντος εσεσθαι. ωςε ȣχι ο Χριςος αιτιος εςι της προδοσιας, αλλα η προδοσια αιτια τος τȣ κυριȣ προγνωσεως. Και επι τȣ διαβολȣ ϗ τȣ προτολλαςȣ ο αυτος λογος. Juſtin Mart. Quæſt. et Reſponſ. ad Orthodox. p. 424, 425.

See alſo Whitb. Com. on the 8th chap. to the Rom. note on ver. 29. For a full and deciſive knowledge

of a probationary ſtate, and the ſolemnity and terrors of a future judgment would be but viſionary dreams: to a creature thus confined by the mechaniſm of action, heaven itſelf would be a fancy-ſcene, the elyſium only of poetic rapture, and hell would be likewiſe ſtripped of its horrors, and only ſerve for one of thoſe very tremendous ideas with which an ignorant and injudicious nurſe terrifies her child. In ſhort, rewards or puniſhments could not, properly, exiſt where there was no choice, and, of conſequence, no merit or demerit

ledge of theſe ſubjects, we muſt probably wait till even the winding up of this diſordered ſcene of things. "Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore"—Probably a full diſplay of theſe providential counſels might be denied to us here for the exerciſe of ſome of our more paſſive virtues, ſuch as faith and hope, contentment and reſignation. See Nicholls's Conf. with a Theiſt, part 3. p. 119.

The foreknowledge of God is reconciled further with the permiſſion of moral evil in Clarke's Attrib. p. 103. Nich. Conf. part 1. p. 195.—Deiſm Delineated, chap. 1. p. 25. Grot. de Verit. Lib. 1. c. 8.

in

in the agents. While, therefore, all mankind have a liberty of action, and are influenced by a variety of ſecondary cauſes, ſuch as the age in which they live, their country, laws, government, police, and, what is moſt of all, peculiarities of education (the mode which heaven, at preſent, hath adopted for governing the world) there may be certain periods and epochs in their lives, when divine communications, and the light of the goſpel, far from anſwering any ſalutary purpoſes, might, by an abuſe, ariſing either from a ſtupid inſenſibility, or an unconquerable averſion to ſuch invaluable bleſſings, only aggravate their guilt, and increaſe their condemnation.

It is not impoſſible but that for this very reaſon, and in purſuance of this generous plan of forbearance, the goſpel was not ſooner revealed to the world.

Very probably the men, being ſtubborn and untractable, groſs and unrefined, in thoſe earlier ſtages of civilization,

and

and ſociety, particularly when idolatry had darkened their underſtandings, and petrified their hearts, appeared to the great Diſcerner of events, to be totally incapable of receiving, as they ought, or of properly improving, the ineſtimable treaſure.

But let us trace the religious hiſtory of men from its earlieſt commencement. Our firſt progenitors, at their original creation, needed no external laws of obedience or duty: the religion of paradiſe wanted no directions; it was the natural glow and impreſſion of the heart: an unborrowed and implanted light was the pureſt revelation; an unfallen innocence the ſtrongeſt and the beſt incentive to their duty: their uncorrupted ſoul was always a temple prepared for the Deity; and their devotion had all that ſublimity and ardour which a conſtant and unreſtrained intercourſe with heaven neceſſarily muſt inſpire. Happy times! happier and unfallen inhabitants of Eden!

* Eden !—The very portrait raiſes admiration—ages yet to come muſt envy your

* How charming is the picture which Milton draws of our firſt parents religious acknowledgments and worſhip in the, yet, happy bowers of an untainted paradiſe :———

" Soon as they forth were come to open ſight of day-
" ſpring, &c.
" Lowly they bow'd, adoring, and began
" Their oriſons, each morning duly paid,
" In various ſtyle : for neither various ſtyle
" Nor holy rapture wanted they, to praiſe
" Their Maker, in fit ſtrains pronounc'd or ſung
" Unmeditated ; ſuch prompt eloquence
" Flow'd from their lips, in proſe or numerous verſe :
" More tunable, than needed lute or harp
" To add more ſweetneſs, and they thus began :
" Theſe are thy glorious works, Parent of Good !
" Almighty ! thine this univerſal frame,
" Thus wondrous fair ; thyſelf how wondrous then !
" Unſpeakable ! who ſitt'ſt above theſe heavens,
" To us inviſible, or dimly ſeen
" In theſe thy loweſt works : yet theſe declare
" Thy goodneſs beyond thought, and pow'r divine.
" Speak, ye who beſt can tell, ye ſons of light,
" Angels ! for ye behold him, and with ſongs
" And choral ſymphonies, day without night,
" Circle his throne, rejoicing. Ye in heaven,
" On earth join all ye creatures to extol

" Him

your enjoyment! But, alas! this pleaſing ſcene quickly diſappeared; this golden age

" Him firſt, him laſt, him midſt, and without end!
" Faireſt of ſtars, laſt in the train of night,
" If better thou belong not to the dawn,
" Sure pledge of day, that crown'ſt the ſmiling morn
" With thy bright circlet, praiſe him in thy ſphere,
" While day ariſes, that ſweet hour of prime.
" Thou ſun, of this great world both eye and ſoul,
" Acknowledge him thy greater, ſound his praiſe
" In thy eternal courſe, both when thou climb'ſt,
" And when high noon haſt gain'd, and when thou fall'ſt.
" Moon, that now meet'ſt the orient ſun, now fly'ſt
" With the fix'd ſtars, fix'd in their orb that flies;
" And ye five other wand'ring fires, that move
" In myſtic dance, not without ſong, reſound
" His praiſe, who out of darkneſs call'd up light.
" Air, and ye elements, the eldeſt birth
" Of nature's womb, that in quaternion run
" Perpetual circle, multiform; and mix,
" And nouriſh all things, let your ceaſeleſs change
" Vary to our great Maker ſtill new praiſe.
" Ye miſts and exhalations, that now riſe
" From hill or ſteaming lake, duſky or grey,
" 'Till the ſun paint your fleecy ſkirts with gold,
" In honour to the world's great Author riſe;
" Whether to deck with clouds th' uncolour'd ſky,
" Or wet the thirſty earth with falling ſhowers,
" Riſing or falling, ſtill advance his praiſe.

" His

age of innocence and purity was ſoon at an end: we ſee nothing in the preſent world but * wrecks of ſuch a paradiſe, and in our preſent ſtate can only trace its † ruins, lying in a ſort of magnificent confuſion. So ſoon, however, as this æra had expired, the patriarchal worſhip,

" His praiſe, Ye winds, that from four quarters blow,
" Breathe ſoft or loud; and wave your tops, ye pines,
" With every plant, in ſign of worſhip wave.
" Fountains, and ye that warble, as ye flow,
" Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praiſe.
" Join voices all ye living ſouls. Ye birds,
" That ſinging up to heaven's gate aſcend,
" Bear on your wings, and in your notes, his praiſe;
" Ye, that in waters glide, and ye that walk
" The earth, and ſtately tread, or lowly creep;
" Witneſs, if I be ſilent, morn or even,
" To hill, or valley, fountain, or freſh ſhade
" Made vocal by my ſong, and taught his praiſe.
" Hail univerſal Lord! be bounteous ſtill
" To give us only good: and if the night
" Have gather'd ought of evil, or conceal'd,
" Diſperſe it, as now light diſpels the dark!"

For an amiable deſcription of this religion of paradiſe ſee Gangannelli's Letters, l. 12. vol. I. p. 46.

* Fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium & ingens
Gloria Teucrorum—.

† See Paſcal's Thoughts.

imme-

immediately vouchſafed, retained the ſtrongeſt ſimilarity to that of * Eden, as the ſimple and uncorrupted morals of thoſe men admitted of its light, and

* How charmingly hath Ovid deſcribed this paradiſaical condition under the idea of a golden age :——

Nondum cæſa ſuis, peregrinum ut viſeret orbem
Montibus, in liquidas pinus deſcenderat undas,
Nullaque mortales, præter ſua, littora norant.
Nondum præcipites cingebant oppida foſſæ:
Non tuba directi, non æris cornua flexi
Non galeæ, non enſis erant. Sine militis uſu
Mollia ſecuræ, peragebant otia, gentes.
Ipſa quoque immunis raſtroque intacta nec ullis
Saucia vomeribus, per ſe dabat omnia tellus:
Contentique cibis, nullo cogente, creatis
Arbuteos fœtus montanaque fraga legebant,
Cornaque & in duris, hærentia mora, rubetis
Et quæ deciderant, patula Jovis arbore, glandes.
Ver erat æternum, placidique tepentibus auris
Mulcebant zephyri, natos ſine ſemine flores.
Mox etiam fruges, Tellus inarata ferebat:
Nec renovatus ager gravidis canebat ariſtis.
Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant:
Flavaque de viridi ſtillabant ilice mella.

Ovid. Met. l. 1. c. 3.

fitted them even for an immediate communion with the † Deity himſelf.

Sin,

† The poetical fiction of the goddeſs Aſtræa quitting this lower world, ſo beautifully mentioned by Ovid in his Metamorphoſis, is a ſtrong heatheniſh allegorical tradition of the depravity which was gradually produced by the fall, and of the great Creator's thus withdrawing from mankind his preſence and protection, when their vices and enormities had diſqualified them for receiving ſo high an indulgence:——

Imminet exitio vir conjugis, illa Mariti;
Lurida terribiles miſcent Aconita Novercæ:
Filius ante diem patrios inquirit in annos:
Victa jacet pietas & virgo, cæde madentes,
Ultima cæleſtum, terras Aſtræa reliquit.

Cicero, without intending it, and without any conſciouſneſs of ſupporting ſuch a doctrine, forcibly points out, at leaſt, the conſequences of this original lapſe, when he ſays, Lib. 3. de Republica, Non a matre, ſed a Novercâ naturâ editum eſſe hominem in vitam; corpore nudo, fragili & infirmo, animo anxio ad moleſtias, humili ad timores, molli ad labores, prono ad libidines, in quo tamen velut obrutus ineſſet ignis quidam divinus mentis. St. Auſtin hath thus commented upon the paſſage, "Non auctor iſte, male viventium moribus dixit effectum, ſed naturam potius incuſavit. Rem vidit, cauſam neſcivit. Latebat enim eum, cur eſſet grave jugum ſuper filios Adam, quia ſacris literis non eruditus ignorabat originale peccatum."

Antoninus,

Sin, however, being once introduced, continued its ravages, and extended its deſtructive ſway; gradually debaſed the human character and ſentiments, and overſpread the features, originally divine, with ſuch amazing ſhades of ignorance and guilt, that the light of the Creator's countenance no longer could diſpel them, or irradiate the darkened maſs: men deprived of their original advantage, a divine illumination, fell by degrees into ignorance and vice, brutality and ſuperſtition: the proper knowledge of Jehovah had periſhed from the earth; idolatry had almoſt covered the world, and threatened the deſtruction of every better ſentiment, every rational impreſſion:

Antoninus, the philoſophic emperor, confeſſeth that we are born mere ſlaves, that is, to our vicious inclinations and paſſions, deſtitute of all true knowledge and ſound reaſon.—§. 11. §. 27. The Platoniſts, likewiſe, believed a pre-exiſtent ſtate, wherein all ſouls ſinned, and loſt their wings, whereby they were capable of aſcending upward, and ſo they ſunk into theſe bodies, partly as a puniſhment for former follies.

at the time when the * yoke of Judaiſm was impoſed, harſh as it appears, and marked

* " Their whole inſtitution was a ſtate of diſcipline " and bondage, under the elements of this world: a " ſort of ſervile confinement, and tutelary regimen, " conducting them by preſent, temporal rewards, and " earthly proſpects; affording only a dark, diſtant, " intimation of better things, and introducing theſe in " figurative repreſentations, types, and emblems, till " they, as well as the reſt of the world, were got out " of their minority, able to walk by a more perfect " rule, and fit to enter on, and make a proper uſe of " the inheritance." Bp. Law's Theo. of Relig. p. 109. —" If Chriſt had appeared in theſe times, he would " have found the Jews, far from being capable of ſo " ſpiritual a religion, not ſufficiently reſtrained by all " the fetters, and all the pomp, of their own ceremo- " nial one from groſs idolatry, and therefore, plainly, " as the apoſtle obſerves, in the condition of children, " wanting to be kept under tutors, and governors, and " the elements of the law, till they ſhould come to be " of age for a ſtate of freedom." Seck. vol. IV. Diſc. 8. p. 152.

" Ea eſt indoles vulgi, præſertim apud gentes " idololatriæ deditas, ut numen coli ſatis ſtudioſe non " putet, niſi operoſo cultu id proſequatur; cui indoli " Moſes ſe adtemperavit. At ſi cum doctioribus ho- " minibus, quales, Chriſto, in terras delapſo plurimi " erant,

marked with auſterity, was it not the only ſyſtem which the genius of thoſe particular times would admit? and might not the ſublimer precepts of the goſpel have been rejected and deſpiſed?

A ſoil needs ſoftening, * cultivation, and improvement, before it will do juſtice to

" erant, res ei fuiſſet; nihil aliud docuiſſet, quam quod " Servator & Apoſtoli diſcipulis ſuis inculcavere." Cler. in Exod. xxv. 31. Shuck. Con. Vol. III. p. 51.— See Leland's Anſw. to Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation, c. 4. p. 51.—Jackſon's Remarks on the ſame book, p. 13.

* ——————— Pater ipſe colendi
Haud facilem eſſe viam voluit, primuſque per artem
Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda.
Virg. Geor. lib. 1. v. 121.

Illa ſeges demum votis reſpondet avari
Agricolæ, bis quæ ſolem, bis frigora ſenſit:
Illius immenſæ ruperunt horrea meſſes.
At prius ignotum ferro quam ſcindimus æquor,
Ventos & varium cœli prædiſcere morem
Cura ſit ac patrios cultuſque habituſque locorum
Et quid quæque ferat regio & quid quæque recuſet.
Hic ſegetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ:
Arborei fætus alibi at que injuſſa vireſcunt
Gramina. Nonne vides croceos ut Tmolus odores,

to ſome uſeful ſeeds; and a plant, extremely delicate and tender in its nature, will not flouriſh, nor ſo much as vegetate or grow, if imprudently planted in unpropitious ſituations, or an improper ſeaſon of the year: and who knows but the uſeful ſeed of the goſpel was, providentially, withheld, till concurring, external, ſecondary circumſtances, ſuch, perhaps, as the *illuminations

India mittit ebur, molles ſua thura Sabæi?
At Chalybes rude ferrum, viroſaque pontus
Caſtorea, Eliadum palmas Epiros equarum?
Continuò has leges, æternaque fœdera certis
Impoſuit natura locis, quo tempore primum
Deucalion vacuum lapides jactavit in orbem.
Virg. Georg.

* What improvement did the world receive from Chriſtianity, while it was darkened and diſgraced by the clouds of ſuperſtition, till the reformation happily ſet us free from ſo wretched a bondage? And was not the reformation chiefly brought about by the enlightened and inquiring ſpirit of the times, when the avenues to learning, of every kind, had been opened and deſigned by the immortal Bacon; when a Locke had anatomized, in ſo ſurprizing a manner, the various powers and operations

tions of ſcience, the *progreſs of letters, † humanity, and civilization, had paved the

rations of the ſoul; and even the whole frame and conſtitution of the univerſe had been explained by a † Newton.

* One reaſon adduced by all divines for the propriety of the time when our bleſſed Lord appeared in the world, is, that letters were conſiderably cultivated in the Roman empire, and the minds of men expanded with improvements.

† "In the infancy of ſocieties, ignorance and barba-
"riſm are as adverſe to true religion as the refinements
"of civilized life are unfavourable to virtue." Main. Ser. p. 331. "Supernatural light was diſpenſed to
"the world at intervals, and by portions, diſtinct and
"diſtant, as well as by a variety of methods, ſuited
"to the varying ſtate of mankind, and their capacity
"to receive it." Main. Ser. p. 340. "The books of
"the New Teſtament give us an hiſtory of ſeveral grada-
"tions in doctrine, ſuited to new circumſtances, and
"to continued new revelations, and thoſe gradations
"were made in a very ſhort compaſs of time." Arts, and ſciences, flouriſhed prodigiouſly in the ſeventeenth century, and forwarded the reformation. They ſeem all at once to have riſen from obſcurity, and burſt forth with an uncommon blaze of ſplendour and diſtinction. Nor was this

† How much the learning of the times contributed to this happy revolution, ſee Notes on Moſh. Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 4.

the way for its effectual reception, and formed the heart into a proper ſoil for its nouriſhment and growth.

It cannot, likewiſe, be totally improbable, but that the clear publication of Chriſtianity might wiſely be protracted for a conſiderable time, that all the different generations of the world, conſidered collectively, might have, as much * as poſſible, an equal enjoyment of this ineſti-

literary taſte confined merely to our own nation, but in a conſiderable degree pervaded Europe at large: in France, Deſcartes, Gaſſendi; in Italy, Galileo; in Denmark, Tycho Brahe; in England, Boyle and Newton; in Germany, Kepler, Helvicus, Leibnitz; in Switzerland, the two Bernoulli, formed ſuch a group of illuſtrious cotemporaries as few other æras of literature can produce, or ſcience call its own.—Add to this, that a Louis the || Fourteenth was a warm encourager and patron of the arts, while a Charles the Second, of England, amid all his other faults, luxuries, and diſſipations, had yet a taſte for the politer ſtudies, though he did not much contribute, as hiſtorians lament, to their protection and ſupport.

* This idea is very ingeniouſly ſtarted and ſupported by the learned and inquiring Biſhop of Carliſle, in his Theory of Religion.—See likewiſe Jenk. on the Reaſ.

|| See Voltaire's Works, Vol. VIII. in fine.

of

ineſtimable diſpenſation. If it had been *communicated immediately upon the fall, without thoſe †types, ‡ſacrifices, and

of the Chriſt. Rel. Vol. II. c. 21. p. 376.—Secker's Serm. Vol. IV. Diſ. 8.—For a further vindication of the time of our bleſſed Lord's appearance, ſee Pearce, vol. II. Sermons 5 and 6.

* It was proper (ſays the learned and penetrating Biſhop of Carliſle) that the houſholder ſhould firſt ſend his ſeveral ſervants to ſee after the ſtate of his vineyard, and reap the fruits of his early care and culture in their ſeaſons: that lower inſtitutions ſhould precede and pave the way for this higheſt of all. Law's Theor. of Rel. p. 115.

† For the corroborating evidence which Chriſtianity receives from the ſacrifices of the law, and all the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, ſo wonderfully receiving their completion in him. See Seck. Serm. Vol. IV. Diſ. 8.—Bp. of London's Paſt. Lett.—Archbp. Tillot. Evid. of the Chriſt. Rel. fol. Vol. III. p. 530 to 577.—Celſus in Orig. Lib. 6.—A Defence of Chriſtian. by the Biſhop of Litchf. and Cov. p. 162.—Bullock's Reaſoning of Chriſt and his Apoſtles Vindicated, p. 63. To the ſame purpoſe ſee Pearſon on the Creed.—Nicholls's Conf. with a Theiſt, part 4. p. 232, 233.—Locke's Paraph. on the Epiſtles.—Tillot. Serm. Fol. Vol. I. Diſc. 47.—Clarke's Serm. Vol. X. Diſc. 5.—Milt. Par. Loſt, book 12.

‡ For the ſtrength which prophecies give to the evidences of Chriſtianity, ſee Scheme of Literal Prophecy conſidered,

and prophecies, which preceded, and ſo happily prefigured its appearance, the minds of men would not have been duly and ſufficiently prepared for its reception and improvement: ſtunned with the account of an incarnate God, the ſoul might have ſhrunk from the myſterious information, confounded and amazed, and left it for the amuſement only of the credulous, or the entertainment of the viſionary mind: at the ſame time, the traces of theſe wonderful events being ſo * far removed from thoſe latter ages, to which

conſidered, p. 322.—Sherl. on the Uſe and Intent of Proph. p. 49, 50.—Locke's Reaſon. of Chriſtian.—And Juſtin Martyr remarks in his Apology, written for the heathens, that predictions fulfilled are the ſtrongeſt demonſtrations of the truth imaginable. See Humphrey's Diſſer. upon Athenagoras, p. 119.

* See Law's Theor. of Rel. p. 115.—"Indeed, as it "is, are not ſome ready to ſay or imagine, though very "unjuſtly, that the credit of the goſpel hiſtory is leſs "for its being ſo ancient, and wearing out continually, "as time runs on? What would they have ſaid then "if the time had been twice as long? Very poſſibly, "there might have been little need for them to ſay any "thing:

which the duration of the world may extend, might, in a conſiderable progreſſion

" thing: almoſt, if not quite, every ray of truth might " have been loſt in the thickneſs of the medium through " which it was to paſs, and at beſt, the Son of God " might have appeared no otherwiſe than as one of the " fabulous heroes of Pagan antiquity." Seck. Serm. Vol. IV. Diſ. 8.

For the propriety of the time of Chriſt's appearance, ſee Tillotſ. Serm. Vol. II. p. 462. — Clarke's Ser. Vol. V. Diſ. 4.

Some of the great characters, who figured at that period, Minos, Lycurgus, Solon, and Numa, had very conſiderably improved their knowledge by travelling into Ægypt, Chaldæa, and Phænicia, which were, then, the very ſeat and nurſeries of information. Zoroaſter, in the Eaſt, and Pythagoras, his follower; Socrates, likewiſe, and all his adherents.—And amongſt the Chineſe, Confucius, and his admirers, had, amazingly, diſſeminated a taſte for knowledge, and a ſpirit of inquiry. The Jewiſh books were then, likewiſe, juſt tranſlated into the moſt common univerſal language. See Univ. Hiſt. Vol. IV. b. 2. c. 1. p. 40. Poſts had been eſtabliſhed by Auguſtus, at Rome, which eaſily circulated every ſpecies of intelligence through all the quarters of their extended empire: Judæa was juſt reduced to a Roman province, ſo that its inhabitants no longer retained the power of life and death in any civil juriſdictions, otherwiſe, they would, probably, have deſtroyed

greſſion of years, have become ſo faint upon the minds of many; the informations of the goſpel might have been ſo eraſed, mutilated by time, miſrepreſented by tradition, or diminiſhed by infidelity; at leaſt, the zeal of its warmeſt profeſſors might, at ſuch a diſtance, and interval of ages, have ſo much languiſhed and declined, (as we ſee it even does, though Chriſtianity, in compariſon, hath been, as it were, ſo recently promulged and communicated to the world) that ſcepticiſm would have poſſeſſed infinitely ſtronger, and more plauſible grounds for its ſuſpicions and its cenſures, than, at preſent, it can boaſt; while the faith of the moſt zealous, candid profeſſor could not have been ſo ſufficiently confirmed, or have reſted on ſo ſolid, ſo untottering a foundation. Upon the preſent ſcheme of things, it is, for any thing the unbe-

ſtroyed the Meſſiah long before the appointed time, ſo ſoon as he did not appear, the temporal prince, ſuited to their wiſhes; and it may be, laſtly, remarked, that from the uniting accounts of hiſtorians, no previous age was, probably, wicked and abandoned enough to have "killed this Prince of life."

liever

liever can demonſtrate to the contrary, in ſome degree, as near to the extremity of the world, and "conſummation of all "things," as it was to the age of Moſes and the prophets. A perſon, who would be heard by a prodigious multitude, when delivering any important information, ſhould not be placed either in the foremoſt ranks or extremities of ſuch an audience, but in a kind of central ſituation, favourable to the whole: his voice will, in ſuch a caſe, be more generally diffuſed, and the tidings he communicates more univerſally underſtood.

But independently of all theſe reaſons, which, confeſſedly, are nothing more than probable conjecture, divines, in general, have ſatisfactorily decided this intereſting point. The intermediate ages, though not ſo bright or brilliant as ſucceeding ones, yet never were without their degrees of inſtruction: reaſon held its lamp as *a light to the paths of theſe ſeemingly bewildered men, † conſcience "accuſed or excuſed" for their actions,

* Pſal cxix. 105. † Rom. ii. 15.

and

and revelations, likewiſe, were *occaſionally beſtowed, communicated indeed without

* In Canaan there was Melchizedec, a King and a Prieſt of the moſt high God; Abimelech, King of Gerar, was not without his knowledge of this covenant of heaven; in Arabia, Job, and his three friends, ſeem to have ſtudied the deepeſt and moſt abſtracted points of divinity; Eliphaz, likewiſe, had his viſions and revelations; Balaam, in Chaldea, was "a prophet of the Lord;" and, probably, wherever men were diſpoſed to receive them, theſe divine communications were uniformly given, as "he is no reſpecter of perſons, but in "every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righ-"teouſneſs, is accepted of him." Acts x. c. 10—34. But to bring this argument into a clear point of view: the extreme longevity of the Antediluvians was particularly favourable to the preſervation and ſecurity of divine revelations. Adam lived with Methuſalem for two hundred and forty-three years; he, with Noah, ſix hundred; with Shem, near one hundred.—After the deluge, freſh revelations were vouchſafed to Noah beyond what he had before received: Noah lived till within two years of the birth of Abraham; and Shem till Iſaac was fifty years old. Paſſing through ſo very few, and very amiable hands, revelation could be neither loſt nor corrupted. Abraham, from the time of his call, A. M. 2083, was the great reviver and reſtorer both of natural and revealed religion; the deſcendants from him and from his children, and his nephew Lot, were

without exception to all who were properly diſpoſed to receive or improve them.

were numerous, as "the ſand upon the ſea ſhore:" the Jews, by their diſperſions into every country, became univerſal preachers of righteouſneſs and virtue: Ægypt, that moſt great and flouriſhing kingdom, though once the ſeat of idolatry and darkneſs, enjoyed early and ſignal opportunities for coming at the knowledge of the true God and religion, by means of the Hebrews, ſojourning ſo long amongſt them, and by thoſe amazing wonders of omnipotence, to which they were witneſſes. In Moſes's time, the nations had heard the fame of the God of Iſrael. Num. xiv. 15. The wars of Canaan, in the age of Joſhua, had, in them, ſuch viſible marks of a divine power, interpoſing for the defence and ſafety of Iſrael, as ſerved to ſpread the fame of the true God to all circumjacent nations. In David's time, the God of Iſrael was known far and near. 1 Chron. xiv. 7. In the reign of Solomon, the fame of the true God was generally diffuſed. Hiram, king of Tyre, learned, among others, to bleſs the Lord God of Iſrael, who made heaven and earth. 2 Chron ii. 12.—1 Kings v. 7. The queen of Sheba came from the ſouthern parts of Arabia Fælix (ſome ſay Æthiopia) to hear the wiſdom of Solomon: and "ſhe alſo bleſſed the Lord "God." 1 Kings x. 9. In the interval, likewiſe, betwixt the reign of Solomon and the captivity, the Almighty vouchſafed to the Gentiles many inſtructive manifeſtations of himſelf: theſe are mentioned at large by

them. Chriſt was, virtually, "the *Lamb "ſlain from the foundation of the world,"

as

by Jenkins's Reaſ. of Chriſtian Rel. Proclamations, moreover, were iſſued out, at different times, by the then greateſt monarchs of the earth, to inculcate upon all their ſubjects and dependants the obſervance of the true religion. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over all Chaldæa, Aſſyria, Arabia, Syria, and Paleſtine: his firſt decree, in the year before Chriſt 603, upon the amazing deliverance of the captives from the fiery furnace, that "whoſoever "ſpoke any thing amiſs againſt the God of Shadrach, "Meſhach, and Abednego, ſhould be cut in pieces, "and their houſes made a dunghill," is recorded in Dan. iii. 29. Afterwards Darius, the Mede, iſſued out an edict of a ſtill more plain and comprehenſive nature about the year before Chriſt 538. Dan. iv. 1, 2. Not long after, in the year 588, Cyrus, ſucceſſor to Darius, made a proclamation favourable to the true religion, and committed it to writing. 2 Chron xxxvi. 22, 23.—Ezra i. 2. So that the true Jehovah was proclaimed, in ſolemn form, over the whole Perſian Empire, as he had been before over the Babylonian: both of them of very wide extent. A little before this time, † Zoroaſter, borrowing his hints from the Jewiſh religion (with the aſſiſtance firſt of Hyſtaſpes, and next of Darius) made a great reformation all over || Perſia, inculcating the

* Rev. xiii. 8.

† For the amazing prevalence of Zoroaſter's doctrines over the Eaſt. See Buſch. Geog. fol. vol. II. Artic. Aſia.

|| Sir Iſaac Newton's Chron. p. 34. 40. Prideaux's Annot. part 1. vol. I. p. 299. 4to. and Anc. Univ. Hiſt. vol. IV. p. 500, 4to.

worſhip

as much the Saviour and Redeemer of thoſe, who ſeeing him through types, yet depended on his merits, even as of others, apparently more favoured, who were preſent at his tragic pangs; and a Simeon's expiring hour was equally ſupported by his ſorrows and atonement, when his enraptured ſoul burſt into *a hymn of gratitude and praiſe, even as the malefactors, who ſuffered with him on the croſs, and had the honour of † that perſonal reviving promiſe, "‡ To day

worſhip of the one God, and teaching the doctrines of a general reſurrection, and a day of judgment, and everlaſting rewards of good men, with everlaſting puniſhments of the wicked. Doctrines, which natural light had not taught, and which, though before revealed to mankind, had been, in a great meaſure, ſunk or obſcured by length of time.

There is, laſtly, another decree or proclamation by Artaxerxes Longimanus, about the year 458, acknowledging the God of heaven, and granting privileges to the Jews. Ezra vii. 12, 13.

* Luke ii. 29.

† See Juſt. Mart. Apol. 2. Pro Chriſ. p. 83.—and Monſ. Paſcal's Relig. Thoughts, c. 2. p. 24.

‡ Luke xxiii. 43.

" ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe." The Almighty, then, had ſheep, though not externally of the eſtabliſhed fold, or viſibly * marked " with his name in their " foreheads," which, as they heard his voice, when breathing but in gentler whiſpers, and not ſo loudly as at preſent proclaiming his commands, he will certainly hereafter bring with him, and " there ſhall be one fold and one ſhep- " herd."

Nor is the divine impartiality any more impeached by the preſent imperfect prevalence of the goſpel.

Some have entertained a ſingular idea, that the Deity is pleaſed with a † ſpecific difference in the religious opinions and ceremonies of his creatures, juſt as with that infinite variety of characters, of features, and abilities, obſervable through his general plan of

* Rev. vii. 3.

† See a Treatiſe on Human Reaſ. printed at London, 1735.

creation:

creation: this appears, however, rather a curious and an amuſing ſentiment, than founded in the nature of his attributes and juſtice, or compatible with his perfections. It hath been (I believe) already ſuggeſted in the courſe of theſe remarks, that in all the different ſyſtems of religion given to mankind, every one hath * riſen ſomewhat above the other imme-

* "The progreſs of religion is admirable in the "eyes of a true philoſopher. It is at firſt ſeen like a "twilight, iſſuing from the boſom of chaos: then, "like Aurora, it announces the day, which at laſt ap "pears, but ſurrounded with clouds, and cannot "manifeſt itſelf in meridian brightneſs, until the "heavens ſhall be opened. Chriſtianity is a ſuperb "picture, traced out by the hand of God, and which "he preſented to men, while it was, yet, but ſketched, "till the moment Jeſus Chriſt came to finiſh it, waiting "the time, when he ſhould give it the luſtre and "colouring it is to bear throughout eternity." Pope Ganganelli's Letters, vol. II. p. 157.

Again, the ſame ſublime writer, "If the religion "which the Almighty hath eſtabliſhed hath taken dif-"ferent forms, and hath been ſince perfected by the "coming of the Meſſiah, it is becauſe God hath treated "it, as he hath done our reaſon, which, at firſt, is

immediately preceding it by a now confeſſedly plain and clear, though, perhaps, at the time, inſenſible gradation. Every method of conveying this intelligence to men, previous to the Chriſtian, was, probably, the higheſt, the pureſt, and the beſt which their faculties and ſituations at the time would admit of, and preparatory to the grand introduction of the goſpel; and * Chriſtianity, as being ſo much

" only a feeble ray, but afterwards, diſcloſing itſelf " by degrees, at laſt appears in the fulleſt light."

That every revelation given to men hath been a gradual improvement on the preceding one. See Edward's Survey of all the Diſpenſations of Relig. Vol. I. p. 396. —Worthington's Eſſay on Man's Redempt. c. 8.—See Nicholls's Conf. with a Theiſt, part 4. p. 231.

* " It would be eaſy to ſhew that the main principles " of every former diſpenſation meet in the Chriſtian, " which not only confirms, but greatly improves them " The goſpel adds purity to the motives, ſtrength to " the ſanctions, and clearneſs to the truths, which moſt " concern us." Mainwaring's Serm. p. 346.

" In the ſacred books you behold the various diſpen- " ſations of God in the ſucceſſive ages of the world, " and the glorious ſcenes of providence, opening by " degrees

much clearer in its lights, higher in its views, more refined in *its precepts, and awful in its ſanctions of puniſhment and of reward, communicated likewiſe by the †Son of God, and written in his blood, was indiſputably the code, which, providentially, was intended for univerſal reception, and from every point of view, in which we can behold it, ſeems diſpenſed as the higheſt model of perfection.

And though this beſt and nobleſt gift, evidently intended for the uſe of all, is not ſo general, ſo diffuſive, or univerſal, as it was deſigned; though this cheering "Sun of righteouſneſs" doth not, as yet,

"degrees, and ſucceeding one another in a regular "order, and at laſt centering in the Meſſiah. And by "obſerving the ſeveral ways in which God has revealed "himſelf to mankind, you clearly ſee the excellencies "of the Chriſtian revelation above all others, in the "purity it requires, and the rewards it propoſes." Biſh. of Lond. Paſt. Lett.

* Vide Grot. de Veritate, Lib. 1. c. 14. lib. 2. c. 8. cap. 9. — Juſt. Mart. Apol. 1. — Pro. Chriſt. p. 48.

† "They will reverence my Son." Mat. xxi. 37.

like that of nature, dart forth an unobſtructed ray, yet are there not reaſons, of a very convincing, though ſubordinate kind, which may abundantly account, without accuſing or impeaching the Deity, for ſo lamentable a defect?

To recur to one of thoſe fundamental principles with which I ſet out. Men, while they continue ſuch, that is, rational and free agents, muſt and will be conſiderably influenced by ſecondary cauſes. The Ruler of the univerſe, as was before obſerved, had he choſen to act on ſuch an arbitrary plan, might have compelled his creatures, by irreſiſtible inſtinct, to the performance of their duty, and the reception of the goſpel: but this would have reverſed the order of his government, and broken, perhaps, a neceſſary * link in the chain of creation. A degree

* Every perſon muſt have obſerved the gradual progreſſive ſtages of being in the world. Such is the divine inimitable plan. From the loweſt vegetable to the moſt finiſhed

finiſhed animal, is a gently, aſcending riſe in the formation of their frames, in the nature of their endowments, and the degrees of their perfection. If man, therefore, had not been created, and created exactly with the powers he poſſeſſeth, a prodigious and unpleaſing chaſm had exiſted betwixt the ſpiritual and the material, the animal and the angelic worlds: he is therefore juſtly ſtiled by an ingenious writer, "The Nexus utriuſque mundi," the important link, which amazingly connects thinking with matter, and unites the ſeemingly moſt diſtant objects of intellectual and corporeal exiſtence. It is not, however, by any means to be ſuppoſed, that, in order to ſupport this beautiful providential climax in nature, the Deity would have created the human race, but with a certainty of greater happineſs to reſult from the whole, than any partial miſery which can ariſe from the permiſſion of that free agency and choice which conſtitute the very eſſence of their being. It would be blaſphemy to think, that God would ſport with the feelings of mankind, by only forming them to be embelliſhments or adjuncts to his rational creation. This we may conclude from his confeſſed attributes. Creation was his mode of communicating happineſs; how far this happineſs is really poſſeſſed, and this providential view fulfilled, there is no determining from preſent appearances, and the diſorders of a probationary world. Futurity will ſolve the doubt. The glorified ſoul will be able to take in the whole of the, now, perplexing and embarraſſing proceſs. Secrets may be opened to our aſtoniſhed eyes, of which, in this bodily immured ſtate we cannot form a conception.

Good may be deduced from apparent evil, and a balſamic honey gathered from the moſt poiſonous herbs. On this ſentiment, however, I durſt ſtake my exiſtence, that every ſoul will be abſorbed in ecſtaſies of admiration, and in tranſports of gratitude to the creating, the redeeming, the preſerving Benefactor; and that a general Hallelujah, not damped by one diſcordant or repining note, will form the triumphant ſong. "The "next range of beings above men (ſays a learned "writer) are the pure and immaterial intelligences; "the next below him, is the ſenſible nature. Man is, "as it were, the comes limitaneus of each nature, "participating of both. And we may obſerve, that in "the proceſs of natural beings, there ſeem to be ſome "creatures placed, as it were, in the confines of ſeveral "provinces, and participating ſomething of either; "as in things that have life, and that have not; there "are placed the minerals betwixt the inanimate and "vegetable province, partaking ſomething analogical "to either. Betwixt the vegetable and ſenſitive provin-"ces, there are plant animals, and ſome kind of inſects, "ariſing from vegetables that ſeem to participate of "both. Betwixt the animal and rational province, there "ſeem to be ſome animals that have a dark image, or "reſemblance of the influxes of reaſon. So between the "corporeal and intellectual world, there is conſtituted "man, participating much of both natures: Ita quòd "non tranſitur ad extremo, niſi per media." Jus. Hales. Prim. Orig. of Man. cap. 2. De Homine. p. 67, fol. — See Jenyns's Diſquiſitions, lately publiſhed on the Chain of Univerſal Being.

gree of * advancement † in literature and education, a regularity proceeding from eſtabliſhed

* See this ſentiment purſued in Moſh. Eccleſiaſt. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 306—321. and vol. I. p. 720.

† As a written law, Chriſtianity was certainly intended to be learned by the common modes of inſtruction: a degree of education, therefore, is neceſſary to its exiſtence, to the peruſing and underſtanding even of the ſcriptures: tradition, without this, or the moſt powerful lectures would ſoon die away. The loweſt of our youth ſhould be grounded and confirmed in the elements of their religion; and ſome ſhould be poſſeſſed of that ſuperior knowledge, which is able to explain, defend, and enforce it: to inveſtigate the principles and evidences upon which it reſts; ſupport it againſt the attacks of infidelity; and inſtruct the uninformed: this advantage, however, cannot be enjoyed in the periods of ſavage life. In a ſtate, which hath not yet emerged from barbarity, and is bleſſed with no regular eſtabliſhed laws, or order, or government, ſuch a form of education never can prevail: the human mind, in ſuch a dreary and unſoftened ſtate, hath no taſte for improvement: in a condition, which is expoſed to perpetual dangers, or perpetual apprehenſions, the ſtrongeſt of all inſtincts, that of ſelf preſervation occupies the thoughts. A love for letters and the politer arts muſt be the conſequence only of a tranquil ſituation, of a mind which hath leiſure to proſecute improvements, and is tolerably at eaſe: that humanity and gentleneſs which peculiarly reſult

eſtabliſhed laws, inſtitutions, and diſcipline, a progreſs in civilization, humanity,

reſult from a national civilization, and owe their birth to a fondneſs for the arts, and a more enlarged intercourſe with men, are ſo congenial with the nature and ſpirit of the goſpel, that wherever they ſubſiſt, and have previouſly been cultivated, they are grand preparatives to its nouriſhment and vigour; in ſhort, ſomething of this humanity muſt exiſt in a country, before the mind is adequately ſoftened, ſo as to receive, improve, and promote the doctrines of the † goſpel.

It hath been urged againſt the ſentiment of the goſpel's only being propagated where ſome degree of knowledge hath, already, paved the way for its reception and advancement, that the Chineſe are exceedingly illuminated with ſcience of almoſt every kind, and yet never have been bleſſed with this ſacred information. Chineſe knowledge, indeed, hath been celebrated as one of the greateſt prodigies in the ancient world. But, like many other objects, ſeen at a diſtance, and hallowed by antiquity, its extent hath been infinitely exaggerated and magnified. Sir William Temple and Dr. Burnet have been the warm ſupporters of Chineſe erudition. To ſtrengthen a favourite hypotheſis, it is unneceſſary to obſerve how facts will be ſtrained. It is aſtoniſhing to ſuppoſe how the learning of this people ſhould be repreſented as ſo immenſe, when Martinius tells his reader, that he was obliged to learn 60,000

† Libitina ſacravit.

independent

ity, and all the milder ſentiments and feelings, appear to be almoſt abſolutely neceſſary for the reception of the goſpel. Men,

independent characters, before he could peruſe the authors in that language with any tolerable eaſe. Wotton's Ref. on Anc. and Mod. Learning, p. 156.— In aſtronomy, to which they have laid ſuch pretenſions, and their panegyriſt Du Halde ſays, they have applied themſelves from the foundation of their empire, ſome inſtances of a moſt egregious, laughable, ignorance might be adduced. F. Verbieſt aſſerts, in a letter, which appeared in the Philoſophical Tranſactions, that the honours, which were paid him in the emperor's court, were, in a great meaſure, owing to his teaching that illuſtrious perſonage to find the time of the night by the fixed ſtars: a ſufficient proof that this ſpecies of ſcience had not, then, arrived to any height of perfection. So ignorant are they repreſented of geography, that their literati, ſeeing a map of the world, in the hands of the Jeſuits, took one of the two hemiſpheres, which contained Europe, Aſia, and Africa, for the Empire of China. — Their notions in religion are curiouſly † abſurd.—Their mechanicks may be judged of from the Jeſuits account of their taking a watch, he brought thither, for a living creature: their civil policy, from the appointment of an officer in Peking, and other large cities, to deſtroy, every morning, all the infants expoſed in the ſtreets, which amounted to a

† Anc. Univ. Hiſt. b. 1. p. 51. (preface) 4to. and Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII.

very

Men, in the ſtupidity of ſavage life, on one hand, or diſſolving in the exceſſes

very conſiderable number. Lel. Advan. and Neceſſity of Div. Rev. vol. II. c. 4. p. 64.—And their method of communicating any ſcience from their yet being without an alphabet. Phil. Tranſ. vol. 59. p. 495. Some ſpecimens of their morals may be ſeen in Lord Anſon's Voyage. See a Collection of Voy. and Diſco. vol. III. p. 518. 4to. or Leland. Adv. and Neceſ. vol. II. p. 2. c. 4. of their government.—Anſ. Voy. Mod. Collec. vol. II. p. 518. Of the bribery and corruption which reign through the whole empire, from the higheſt tribunals down to the loweſt offices. Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII. b. 1. c. 1. 4to. In ſhort, "the Chineſe appear to be "little better than a nation of ſignal hypocrites, who "boaſt of the equity and excellency of their laws, and "ſtop at no violation of them, but, under the faireſt "outſide and pretence of juſtice and probity, indulge "themſelves in all manner of extortion, fraud, and "villainy." Beſides, it appears, from many writers of undoubted veracity, that Chriſtianity was pretty early carried into China. See Jenk. Reaſ. of the Chriſ. Relig. vol. I. c. 3. p. 134.—Mod. Univ. Hiſt. b. 8. p. 77. 4to. edit. And if this had not been the caſe, their knowledge is, by no means, in ſo advanced a condition, as to afford ſo much as the ſhadow of an objection to the arguments which are here advanced. See Falcon. on the Inf. of Clim. p. 469.—For ſeveral hints concerning the Chineſe, and, in ſome degree, for the ſtructure of this note, the author acknowledges himſelf conſiderably indebted to the learned and metaphyſical Biſhop of Carliſle, in his Theor. of Rel.

of

of refinement on the other, are but ill prepared, as hiſtory moſt fully proves, to receive ſo divine and heavenly an inſtitution, to improve its advantages, or indeed ſo much as conſider its importance. Even in an age, and country like our own, enlightened with knowledge, (to mention but one ſingle obſtacle glanced at in theſe remarks) do we not experience inſuperable difficulties, when attempting to enforce the precepts of Chriſtianity on the ignorant and the untutored mind? Hence charity hath always wept at inevitable ignorance, and, along with its tears, provided a relief, by erecting and endowing ſeminaries of inſtruction for the poor and uninformed, in which they might receive the principles of learning, and by a gradual proceſs of improvements, have their minds and affections expanded and diſpoſed for divine informations. Nations, on the other hand, immerſed in * ſenſuality and luxurious gratifications (the

* What a horrid picture is drawn by Salluſt of the vices introduced into ancient Rome by luxurious refinement:

(the general concomitants of extreme civilization) are confeſſedly improper to be depoſitaries of a law ſo repugnant to

ment: " Ibi primum inſuevit exercitus populi Romani " amare, potare, ſigna, tabulas pictas, vaſa cælata " mirari, ea privatim ac publice rapere, delubra " ſpoliare, ſacra profanaque omnia polluere. Rapere, " conſumere, ſua parvi pendere, aliena cupere, pu- " dorem, pudicitiam, divina atque humana omnia " promiſcua habere, nihil penſi neque moderati ha- " bere." Sall. Bell. Catal.

" People in a barbarous ſtate" (ſays Dr. Falconer, in his Obſervations upon Climate) " have a ſettled " averſion to learning. The northern nations, which " invaded Italy, deſtroyed all the monuments of lite- " rature they could meet with: a loſs, which their " poſterity, now, ſo *much* deplore; and the Arabs, at " one time, exerciſed a ſimilar devaſtation through the " eaſt." Falc. on Clim. b. 6. c. 2. p. 335. And Salluſt, ſpeaking of the barbarous Numidians, ſays, " Hi neque moribus neque lege aut imperio cujuſquam " regebantur." Sall. Bell. Cat. — Jugurth. Deſ. Numid.

" The doctrine of indulgences (ſays Falconer on " Climate) was the immediate cauſe of the reformation; " but this would ſcarcely have taken place, had it not " been aſſiſted by learning and knowledge, which " ſerved to diſpel that cloud of ſuperſtition, which then " obſcured and diſgraced religion." Falc. on Clim. p. 505.—See Moſh. Eccl. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 4.

their

their criminal purſuits and inclinations, and of conſequence ſo likely to be rejected with contempt. From people in ſuch circumſtances to * withhold Chriſtianity, and wait ſome future probable period of a greater ſenſibility to its bleſſings and deſigns, is ſuch an inſtance of ſuperior benevolence in heaven, as deſerves our higheſt praiſe, and gratitude, and veneration, nay, even challenges amazement: for "† Lord, "what is man, that thou art ſo minutely

* "God ſtays till they have filled up the meaſure of "their iniquities before he puniſhes a people, and for "the ſame reaſons of mercy and goodneſs he waits "for the moſt proper ſeaſons to impart his revealed will "to them, and to have it preached to them, before "would be only to increaſe their condemnation. And "it is not only juſt, but merciful for him to withhold "the knowledge of his revealed will from thoſe, who, "he foreſees would reject it, and abuſe the oppor-"tunities which ſhould be offered them, to the aggra-"vation of their own guilt and puniſhment." Jenk. Reaſ. of the Chriſ. Rel. vol. I. c. 2. p. 142. That the goſpel is probably withheld from many people, becauſe of their moral unfitneſs to receive it. See Law's Theor. of Rel. p. 27.—Moſhe. Eccleſ. Hiſ. vol. II. p. 306.—Millar's Hiſt. of the Propag. of Chriſtianity.

† Pſalm viii. 4.

mindful

" mindful of him, or the ſon of man," that even in the grand diſpenſations of thy bleſſings, thou ſo particularly " regardeſt him." It was our Saviour's method, when he lived upon earth, to withhold more abſtracted inſtructions from his followers, becauſe they were * not then " able to bear them:" this is poſſibly the generous and the enlarged ſyſtem on which he acts to all; to communities and to the world. Experience, ſpeaking in the page of hiſtory, gives us abundant teſtimonies of this fact, that where-ever Chriſtianity hath been propoſed to people in thoſe † unfavourable moral circumſtances, which have here been ſuppoſed,

* John 16. 12.

† For the particular diſpoſitions prevailing in all ſavage nations, unfavourable to the embracing or encouragement of Chriſtianity amongſt them. Vide Diodor. Siculus. lib. 3. p. 108.—Tacitus German. Paſſim de Fennis. — Carver's Trav. among the American Indians, p. 238.—Note 50. Robertſ. Hiſt. of America.—Gibb. Dec. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. p. 224.—Foſter's Obſerv. in a Voyage round the World. vol. III. p. 251 and 290.

it

it hath generally met with an unhappy fate, "* been rejected, like its bleſſed "Author, and deſpiſed of men." When it was communicated to the eaſtern nations, thus immerſed in luxury and animal deſire, they quickly changed it for the licentious creed and promiſes of Mahomet, as more congenial with their unhappy wiſhes, and allowing an infinitely greater ſcope for prohibited enjoyments. Upon the avowed principles of the goſpel, therefore, their condemnation will be heavier, and their ſentence more ſevere, than if they had never received from heaven this ineſtimable †bleſſing. And when the ‡Africans were

* Iſaiah liii. 8.

† That the inhabitants of Aſia relapſed into their former ſuperſtitions, and the errors of Mahometaniſm, after they had heard the tidings of the goſpel, ſee Moſh. Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 439, more fully, p. 714. —Chardin's Trav. through Mengrelia into Perſia.—Collect. of Voy. and Diſc. vol. VI. p. 338 and 371. —Bowen's Complete Syſt. of Geograph. fol. vol. II. Article Aſia.—Irwin's Voyage up the Red Sea, p. 10.

‡ See this point diſcuſſed at large in Moſheim's Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 305.

viſited with its purer informations, rude *and barbarous, ignorant and brutal, they immediately clouded and deformed its features with their own peculiar native abſurdities and diſguſting ſuperſtitions. It may further, likewiſe, and with juſtice, be remarked, that it was our Lord's original injunction to his diſciples, when he ſent them into the world, that they ſhould "† preach the goſpel to every "creature." St. Paul, in conſiſtency with this commiſſion, declares, that in his days, "‡ their ſound had gone out into "all lands, and their words unto the "ends of the world." It appears, from the earlieſt records of the church, that nearly || every, then, diſcovered people had

* Complete Syſtem of Geograph. vol. II. fol. p. 380.

† Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Rom. x. 18.

|| "Conveniebat divinæ providentiæ id efficere, ut "quod optimum eſſet, pateret quam latiſſime. Id au-"tem contingit religioni Chriſtianæ, quam ipſi videmus "per Europam omnem, ne Septentrionis quidem re-"ceſſibus

* had ſeen this great light. The world, indeed, ſince that more early age, is prodigiouſly

" ceſſibus excluſis, doceri; nec minus per Aſiam om-
" nem, etiam ejus inſulas in oceano, per Ægyptum quo-
" que, per Æthiopiam, & alias aliquot Africæ partes,
" poſtremo per Americam. Grot. de Veritate, &c. &c.
—For the General Propagation of Chriſtianity, ſee Young's Def. of Revel. vol. 2. — Gibb. Decl. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. vol. I. c. 15. p. 449.—" There
" exiſts not (ſays Juſtin Martyr) a people, whether
" Greek or Barbarian, or any other race of men, by
" whatſoever appellation or manners they may be
" diſtinguiſhed, however ignorant of arts or agriculture,
" whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in
" covered waggons, amongſt whom prayers are not
" offered up in the name of a crucified Jeſus to the
" Father and Creator of all things." Gibb. vol. I. c. 15. p. 512.—Jenk. Reaſ. of the Chriſt. Rel. vol. I. c. 2. paſſim. — See Poſtſcript to Scripture Vindicated, in anſwer to a book intituled Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation, p. 153.—It may be urged, indeed, againſt theſe remarks, that Mahometaniſm pervades a very conſiderable part of the world, and is eſtabliſhed over an infinitely larger tract of country than the Chriſtian religion. This, indeed, and Paganiſm, have been ſuppoſed by ſome (but I rather think they have exaggerated the account) to cover at leaſt five ſixths of the globe.

* Iſaiah ix. 2.

digiouſly enlarged: tribes, and kingdoms, and nations, are * diſcovered, of which there

But, then, it ſhould be remembered, that amongſt theſe people, there are prodigious numbers of Chriſtians intermixed: that one ſect of the Mahometans, in particular, are diſtinguiſhed by the name of good followers of the Meſſiah, and have, principally, ſentiments in common with the Chriſtian; that the Alcoran is built upon ſuch articles of revelation, culled both from the Old and New Teſtament, as Mahomet eſteemed compatible with his deſigns, and is, in all its more amiable features, the offspring of the goſpel. A number of Chriſtians, likewiſe, are to be found in almoſt all Pagan countries: ſome rites of Heatheniſm, moreover, are the plain and indiſputable relicks of a revelation formerly beſtowed, though clouded and disfigured: and ſo many of what have been eſteemed the natural religious opinions of a people, are, when viewed very near, ſo akin to the ſcriptures, ſo probably the reſult of ancient traditions, tolerably preſerved, or of the goſpel once communicated to the country, now unhappily loſt or expelled, that, perhaps, it would be no eaſy undertaking to fix on any ſpot or corner of the earth, where, in a greater or a leſs proportion, this "Sun of Righteouſneſs hath not ariſen with healing in "his wings."

* Mr. Brerewood aſſerts, that in the dominions of the Turks, in Europe, the Chriſtians make, at leaſt, two-third parts of the inhabitants; and in Conſtantinople itſelf,

there was not then a veſtige or idea. The late amazing and ſucceſsful progreſs of arts and ſciences, commerce and manufactures, the * invention of that uſeful inſtrument, the compaſs, the penetrating, curious ſpirit of philoſophy, and the adventuring taſte and genius of the times, have led to the diſcovery of people and of † countries, heretofore

itſelf, he reckons above twenty Chriſtian churches, and above thirty in Theſſalonica, where the Mahometans have or had but three moſques.

* For the little mechanical inventions, which have ſo much promoted ſcience and the arts, ſuch as paper, printing, engraving, teleſcopes, microſcopes, the thermometer, air-pump, &c. See Wott. Reflect. on Anc. and Mod. Learn. c. 15. p. 185. Theſe are all comparatively but modern in their diſcovery, and under what inconveniences literature muſt have laboured before their exiſtence, will be obvious to any perſon, who conſiders the amazing fields they have reſpectively opened of, hitherto, unexplored knowledge and curious inveſtigation.

† Whoever compares the ancient and modern parts of Europe, Aſia, Africa, and America, as they are even deſcribed in Well's Dionyſ. Geogra. Oxon. 1704, will be convinced of this fact.

unknown, where conjecture but ſuppoſed ſome untilled waſte, and fancy fixed the " * ſolitary dwelling of the " † dragon or the owl." But, extended, as is the world, even at the preſent, when compared with its more diminutive proportions, in the apoſtles days, yet, over a very conſiderable part of its nations and its territories ‡ hath Chriſtianity

* The ancients conſidered the greater part of Africa as deſert and uninhabitable. Complete Syſtem of Geograph. fol. vol. II. p. 377.

† Iſaiah xiii. 21.

Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
Sæpe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces. Virg.

‡ Vide § Fabricius Lux. Evang. toti Orbi exoriens, c. 3, 4. " But in the next age, the apologiſts glory that " Chriſtianity was ſpread to the remoteſt corners of the " world among the Indians, Mauritanians, Getulians, " Spaniards; among the Sarmatians, the Daci, the " Germans, and the Scyths. And Tertullian, in par- " ticular, braves the heathen with the incredible ſuc- " ceſs of Chriſtianity." " Heſterni ſumus & veſtra om- " nia implevimus, urbes, inſulas, caſtella, municipia,

§ Complete Syſtem of Geog. fol. vol. II. article Aſia.

" concilia-

anity been ſpread, and the Redeemer's love proclaimed. There is no arguing from the preſent face and appearances of things, or the ſeemingly but dark ſtate of the countries we examine, that they never have been bleſſed with opportunities of information. The *precious and immortal

" conciliabula, caſtra ipſa, tribus, decuria, palatium, " ſenatum, forum." Tertullian.

* Many countries, it is true, have been diſcovered ſince the firſt propagation of Chriſtianity in the world. But it ſhould always be remembered, that the goſpel had been, probably, communicated to the inhabitants long before the æra of our intercourſe amongſt them. Several reſemblances of it may be traced in ſome of their religious ſentiments and rites, which natural reaſon could never have ſuggeſted to them, and which are, probably, the reſult of a divine revelation, continued by tradition. Nicholls, in his Conference with a Theiſt, mentions the uſe of ſacrifices, one very diſtinguiſhing argument of a communicated revelation, as almoſt univerſal. Whoever is at all acquainted with the elegant writers of Greece or Rome, needs not be informed how much ſacrifices were in uſe in thoſe cultivated nations. Heſiod, whoſe claim to antiquity is, I believe, undiſputed, tells us, that the golden age was, particularly, remarkable

immortal ſeed of the goſpel may, probably, have ſome time been committed to

for men's ſacrificing to the gods; and that Jupiter was angry with thoſe of the ſilver age, and extirpated that race of men from the world, becauſe they neglected ſuch a neceſſary ſervice.

οὐδ' ἀθανατοις θεραπευειν
Ηθελον, οὐδ' ερδειν μακαρων ἱεροις επι βωμοις
τους μιν επειτα
Ζευς Κρονιδης εκρυψε χολωμενος, ουνεκα τιμας
Ουκ εδιδυν μακαρεσσι θεοις. ———

Heſiod Oper. Dies.

The ſlighteſt knowledge of the Grecian bard, preſents the delighted and aſtoniſhed reader with the obſervance of this religious cuſtom. The venerable Priam, Ulyſſes, and Achilles, are deſcribed as attending to it, with a particular exactneſs. The Latin poet hath often drawn the hero of his piece as engaged in the pious ſolemnities of the altar. In ſhort, the Iliad and the Æneid are both ſo interſperſed with the deſcription of theſe offerings, that to attempt a full enumeration of the paſſages would be an inſult to the recollection of every perſon who hath read them, and, in ſome degree, a full and general quotation of thoſe inimitable poems.

The whole ancient world, from Africa to Scythia, abounded with theſe ſacrifices. The rites and ceremonies of

to their furrows, though unhappily it hath been choked and over-run with the weeds

of the ancient Britons, in this reſpect, are univerſally confeſſed. Their prieſts, their druids, and their victims, make a figure on the page of every hiſtorian, who hath written on the nation. So wedded were they to idolatries and ſacrifices, that Pliny, Hiſ. Lib. 30. cap. 1. ſays, "Ut dediſſe Perſis videri poſſint." The Gauls ſhock our humanity with the dreadful practice even of human ſacrifices. Cæſar. Com. Bell. Gall. b. 6. The Spaniards were not without their idolatries and victims. Macrob. Sat. cap. 19. The elegant pen of Cæſar hath likewiſe left it upon record. Bell. Gall. lib. 6. that the ancient Germans offered ſacrifices to the ſun, to the fire, and to the moon. "Deorum numero eos "ſolos ducunt, quos cernunt & quorum opibus "aperte juventur, ſolem & Vulcanum & lunam, "reliquos ne fama quidem acceperunt." If we look ſouthward, into Africa, theſe inſtitutions were obſerved to the majeſty of their Jupiter, and to many of their deceaſed kings; and northward, we find the hands of the Scythians ſtained with human blood, ſhed to appeaſe their goddeſs Diana Taurica, ſo celebrated amongſt them.—The Ægyptians were quite famous for their ſacrifices and religious rites.—Eaſtward, likewiſe, the Perſians and the Syrians made uſe of the ſame eſtabliſhed ceremonies. Their deities, Moloch, Aſhtaroth, Baal, Dagon, Niſroch, Rimmon, Nebo, and the

the victims, which they ſacrificed to them, are familiar to the ears of all, who are converſant with holy writ.

Dr. Falconer, in his Remarks upon the Influence of Climate, p. 316, ſays, That ſacrifices to the gods appear to have been almoſt univerſal among ſavage as well as civilized nations. The authorities he quotes to ſupport his opinion are reſpectable and various, ancient and modern. It is obſervable, ſays Rollin, that, in all ages and regions, the ſeveral nations of the world, however various and oppoſite in their characters, inclinations, and manners, have always united in one eſſential point, the inherent opinion of an adoration due to a ſupreme Being, and of external methods neceſſary to evidence ſuch a belief. Into whatever country we caſt our eyes, we find prieſts, altars, ſacrifices, feſtivals, religious ceremonies, temples, or places conſecrated to religious worſhip. Pref. to Roll. Anc. Hiſt.—Shuckford's Connex. vol. I. 4to. b. 2.—Carver's Travels into North America, c. 13. p. 387, and c. 7. p. 282.—Cook's Second Voyage to the Southern Hemiſphere, p. 226.—Collection of Travels and Diſcov.—Chardin's Trav. through Mengrelia, into Perſia, vol. VI. p. 378.—A brief Account of Indoſtan, in the ſame collection, vol. VI.—Kolben's Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, Mod. Coll. of Voy. and Diſc. vol. II. p. 394.—Foſter's Obſerv. in a Voyage round the World, fol. vol. III. p. 548.—Cook's Voy. round the World, fol. vol. I. p. 185.

The countries, however, which have not, at ſome period, been viſited with the glorious light of the goſpel, are, comparatively, few. Whoever will take the trouble

of

weeds of ignorance or ſuperſtition. If the huſbandman attends not to the ſoil and cultivation, or if he * mixes, as he

of peruſing Young's Def. of Rev. vol. II. c. 4. will find a very particular account of the exceedingly extenſive propagation of Chriſtianity, even in very early ages of the world. The paſſage is well worth the peruſal of all, who wiſh to be ſatisfied on this intereſting ſubject.

Pliny, in a letter addreſſed to the Emperor Trajan, at the latter end of the firſt century, makes the following obſervations, which diſplay the amazing progreſs which the goſpel had made even in that early period, "Multi "enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriuſque ſexus "etiam, vocantur in periculum & vocabuntur. Neque "enim civitates tantum ſed vicos etiam atque agros "ſuperſtitionis iſtius contagio pervagata eſt." Juſtin Martyr, who wrote in the middle of the next century, confirms this opinion. Vide Dial. cum Tryph. Judæo. — And Chriſtianity was ſo increaſed by the fourth century, that St. Auſtin, who then flouriſhed, aſſures us, that "the Chriſtians were more in "number than the Jews and worſhippers of images "added together." — See Dr. Whitby's General Pref. to his Com. upon the Scrip. p. 26.

* That the religious opinions prevailing in many countries are the effects of tradition, mixed with their own

he ſows, " † tares with the wheat," it is of little conſequence, that heaven " gives the ‡ former and the latter " rain," and every other neceſſary help to fertility and vegetation: his " barns will never burſt with plenty, " nor his § fields ſtand ſo thick with " corn, that they even laugh and " ſing." Many nations, it is certain, which have received Chriſtianity, have ſo debaſed it with a mixture of their own traditions, and diſfigured it with abſurd legendary tales, that but a very dubious and imperfect reſemblance of its original air, and frame, and complexion, is viſible amongſt them. The venerable relics, mutilated, however, and tranſ-

own abſurdities, ſee Foſter's Obſerv. in a Voyage round the World, fol. vol. III. p. 535.

† Matt. xiii. 25. ‡ Joel ii. 23. § Pſal. lxv. 14. That ſacrifices were of divine appointment, only ſee Euſeb. Demonſt. Evan. lib. 1. c. 10.—Deiſm Delineated, vol. I. c. 3. p. 101.—Shuckford's Connexions, vol. I. p. 84. 4to.

formed

formed as they are, tell us, that the ſoul of this *now* injured form, once breathed in their climes. In ſome countries, it muſt be confeſſed, it is impoſſible to diſcover any veſtiges or remains of this divine inſtitution: whether the inhabitants of theſe peculiar nations may not, ſometime, have received, but afterwards trampled on, the truths of the goſpel, or whether, reſembling characters written in the ſand, the impreſſions that were made on untenacious minds, were not ſpeedily eraſed—whether they ever were indulged with Chriſtianity; whether they contemptuouſly rejected the indulgence, or were * unfaithful, adulterating depoſitaries of the truſt, is a ſecret buried in the depths of time, or at leaſt inveloped in the thickeſt miſts of doubt and conjecture. Hiſtory, the grand preſerver of events, hath not left us ſufficient authentic memorials, from which we can form

* See Moſheim's Ecc. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 762.

any

any adequate concluſions on this intereſting ſubject: the intelligences it hath tranſmitted, or which at leaſt have deſcended through its darkened pages to theſe remoter times, are ſo ambiguous and imperfect, that the moſt diligent inquirer is baffled in his reſearches, and reads, and pores in vain. But, be this as it may, we muſt acknowledge this melancholy fact, that Chriſtianity is not ſo generally publiſhed, as compaſſion might deſire. Many nations, it is certain, ſtill * ſit in a comparative darkneſs, uninſtructed, unreformed; their creed (if they profeſs one) conſiderably tinctured with idolatry and error, and their practice deeply ſhaded with the general, the univerſal concomitants of ſuch ignorance, licentiouſneſs, and vice. The parent's error communicated to the child, and that child's entailed, by a fatal inheritance, on † ſucceeding gene-

* Iſaiah ix. 2.

† Et nati natorum, & qui naſcentur ab illis. Virg.

rations.

rations. Thus one wave, when ruffled by the winds and the ſtorms, communicates the undulating influence to the reſt, till the remoteſt kindred drops are in a fatal agitation, when itſelf is at reſt.

But though this diſcouraging aſpect of things ſtrikes us in the Chriſtian world, yet abundance of reaſons founded in human frailty, paſſions, and miſconduct, and totally unconnected with any ideas of partiality in God, immediately preſent themſelves to every candid mind, as ſufficient to account, without further inveſtigation, for the very confined, inſufficient propagation of the Chriſtian religion. Our own extreme indifference and coldneſs in religion; the want of proper zeal and earneſtneſs in Chriſtian countries, particularly in people of the * reformed church to

* It is obſerved, by ſome modern travellers, that the miſſionaries from the Romiſh church are infinitely more aſſiduous

to diſſeminate the faith, though the harveſt is ſo extremely plentiful, yet a defi-

aſſiduous and zealous than our own in bringing over proſelytes and converts to their faith. See Kalm's Trav. into N. America, vol. II. p. 269.—Moſh. Eccl. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 76.—and Fab. Lux Evang. c. 33. p. 550. This involves no ſtigma or diſgrace on our own. It is extremely natural for Popiſh eccleſiaſtics to have more than common zeal to propagate their faith, when we conſider that ungenerous peculiarity of ſentiments which lays the very baſis of their unhappy ſuperſtitions. Convinced, as they blindly are, that theirs is the one ancient, univerſal church; that through an infinite range of uninterrupted numbers, their apoſtle is the real ſucceſſor of St. Peter, to whom "the keys of "heaven were committed," that all diſſenters from it are infidels and heretics, without ſo much as the ſhadow of a title to eternal life; with ſuch perſuaſions as theſe, the beſt diſpoſed of them muſt be anxious to convert as many as poſſible to a church, which, in their opinion, is the only paſſport to eternal life. The Proteſtant miſſionaries, on the other hand, indulging a much more liberal faith, apprehending that a difference of ſentiments is unavoidable, and that ſuch a difference upon ſpeculative points will exclude no honeſt well-diſpoſed Chriſtian, from the manſions of the bleſſed, but that the future paradiſe of God will have in it plants and flowers from every different quarter of the world,

of

of every various hue, and form, and complexion. It is no wonder, if, with this expanded faith, they do not practiſe all the artifices of the French † Popiſh eccleſiaſtics for the advancement of their opinions, though not wanting, perhaps, in a candid, rational and zealous recommendation of the doctrines ef the goſpel.

The Society for promoting the Goſpel in foreign parts have made every effort, and taken every method in their power, to foſter and to cheriſh this noble inſtitution. A godlike charity hath glowed in their hearts, and raiſed them far above the general pitch of human exertion. Every precaution hath been taken, which circumſtances would admit, to have the very beſt of miſſionaries ſent over, and aſſiduouſly employed in this uſeful department. For the abilities and recommendations which they expect in theſe miſſionaries, and the ſtrict injunctions, which they afterwards lay upon them for the faithful and conſcientious execution of their office; ſee Humph. Hiſt. Acc. of the Incor. Soc. chap. 4. p. 69. —And, indeed, all obſtacles and diſcouragements conſidered, "this grain of muſtard ſeed" hath wonderfully increaſed, and though not become ſo great a tree, "as "that the fowls of the air may lodge under the branches "of it," yet it hath ſpread over a prodigious tract of territory, almoſt unexpected. But the reſources of the charity are, alas! inſufficient for effecting thoſe extenſive purpoſes which compaſſion might ſuggeſt. A nobler opportunity, therefore, for the exerciſe of

† For the pains which Spaniſh miſſionaries have taken to propagate popery in their department of America, ſee Complete Syſtem of Geograph. fol. vol. II. p. 524.

Chriſtian munificence, in thoſe whom heaven hath bleſſed with its ſtores, is no where, perhaps, more forcibly preſented than in adminiſtering to the exigencies, the ſupport, and the enlargement of this important undertaking. A little ſum of money religiouſly depoſited in this ſeemingly *peculiar* fund of heaven may repay its owner, at ſome future day, with the prodigious intereſt of everlaſting riches and unfading diſtinctions. The poor reformed Indian would laviſh accumulated bleſſings on the man who thus, *eventually*, "had "turned him from darkneſs unto light, and from the "power of Satan unto God;" and the reflexions of conſcience on ſo amiable an action would ſpread ſuch a ſweet repaſt in the ſoul, as not all the riches or honours of the world are able to beſtow. See further to this purpoſe the Biſhop of London's Addreſs to ſerious Chriſtians to aſſiſt the Society.

That the conduct of ſome miſſionaries, in thoſe foreign parts, is not altogether ſuch as might invite thoſe poor unhappy ſavages to be converts to Chriſtianity, we have ſeveral very melancholy teſtimonials upon record. See Kalm's Travels, vol II. p. 270.—Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII. 4to. p. 133—Moſh. Eccl. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 306.—Complete Syſtem of Geograph. fol. vol. II. p. 710. This ſentiment, however, I ſubmit to the ſuperior judgment and deciſion of thoſe who are better acquainted with the ſubject.—I would rather look upon the brighter ſide, and pay that tribute of applauſe and panegyric which the very exemplary lives, and zeal, and application of many others amongſt them certainly demand.—

If

* deficiency of labourers to diſpatch into this foreign † vineyard of the Lord; the temporal inconveniencies, dangers, and apprehenſions to which theſe labourers are neceſſarily expoſed; a baniſhment from their ‡ native ſoil, their attachments, and their friends; an expoſure of their perſons, properties, and lives to the cruelty of ſavages, to the dangers of the ocean, and a forfeiture of all thoſe liberal enjoyments, which may be taſted in an age, embelliſhed with ſcience, and in a country bleſſed with liberty and with

If undeſerved cenſure frequently falls on the moſt upright of the clergy in a civilized country, we ſhould be cautious of admitting thoſe ill-natured ſurmiſes and unfavourable inſinuations, which may more probably attack the very beſt, in a leſs propitious ſituation; eſpecially if we conſider that the very nature of their undertaking is ſuch as calls from every candid mind for conſiderable indulgence.

* Preface to Biſh. Wilſon's Indian Inſtructed, p. 75.
† Luke x.
‡ Nos patriæ fines, nos dulcia linquimus arva. Virg.

the arts; theſe diſcouragements, not adequately obviated by ſuperior rewards, held out to the ingenious, the enterprizing, and the bold; not * ſoftened by the promiſe of a moderate proviſion, or the comforts of independence: the poorly qualified miſſionaries, we of courſe muſt take up with (ſince none of a ſuperior claſs will ſubmit to the toil, without the certain proſpect of a diſtinguiſhed retribution)---a defect, I ſay, thus obviouſly exiſting, and, in ſome degree, thus plainly accounted for in the talents, the addreſs, the zeal, and †aſſiduity of the miſſionaries we employ --- the inconſiſtency in the conduct of

* For the hardſhips and difficulties which ſome of the miſſionaries have to encounter, ſee Humphrey's Hiſtorical Account of the Incorporated Society for propagating the Goſpel.

† Collec. of Mod. Voy. and Diſcov. more particularly Memoirs concerning the Settlements of the Jeſuits in Paraguay.—Collec. of Voy. and Trav. vol. II. p. 36.

many

many Chriſtians with their † religious opinions, and the flagrant contradictions

† " One cannot but obſerve (ſays an able writer) " the great and general prejudice which muſt prevail in " both the Indies againſt all Europeans, from the in- " jurious treatment they have often received from us; " as may be ſeen in almoſt every late account of voyages. " Nor are the frequent quarrels amongſt Chriſtians " themſelves, and their ill uſage of each other, in the " articles of trade particularly, a leſs prejudice againſt " their profeſſion, which ever received the greateſt " checks from the diviſions raiſed amongſt its propaga- " tors; as was remarkably the caſe not long ago in " China." Law's Theor. of Relig.

For the neceſſity of a good example to influence theſe negroes, ſee the Biſhop of London's Letters. " I can- " not omit (ſays that pious and learned prelate) to ſug- " geſt to you one of the beſt motives that can be uſed " for diſpoſing the heathens to embrace Chriſtianity, " and that is, the good lives of Chriſtians. Let them " ſee, in you and your families, examples of ſobriety, " temperance, and chaſtity, and of all thoſe other vir- " tues and graces of the Chriſtian life. Let them ob- " ſerve, how ſtrictly you oblige yourſelves, and all that " belong to you, to abſtain from curſing and ſwearing, " and to keep the Lord's day holy, and to attend the " public worſhip of God, and the ordinances which " Chriſt hath appointed in his goſpel. Make them

tions ſo lamentably obvious betwixt our actions and belief --- the injurious and cruel

" ſenſible by the general tenour of your behaviour and " converſation, that your inward temper and diſpoſi- " tion is ſuch as the goſpel requires, that is to ſay, " mild, gentle, and merciful: and that as often as " you exerciſe rigour and ſeverity, it is wholly owing " to their idleneſs and obſtinacy. By theſe means you " will open their hearts to inſtruction, and prepare " them to receive the truths of the goſpel, &c." Gibſ. Paſt. Letters.—See Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. XI. b. 14. p. 34. Note R. 4to. edit.

To this purpoſe, ſee what forcibly plain arguments the Biſhop of Sodor and Man puts into an Indian's mouth, as obſtructing his converſion. " They told me " plainly, (ſays the untutored ſavage when he had " repreſented the inſtructions he had received, to his " brother Indians) the Chriſtians would have you be- " lieve what they do not believe themſelves: for is it " likely that people who are fully perſuaded of ſuch " things, as they tell you, would lead ſuch lives as they " commonly do? What doth it ſignify to know the " God whom they worſhip, and the good rules he hath " given them, if thoſe rules are not able to make them " better than other people? Are they not as careleſs as " if they were ſure that nothing is to be feared or hoped " for after this life? You may be certain, that if Chriſ- " tians did really believe what they told you, there

" would

cruel treatment which many foreign nations continually receive from European diſciples of Jeſus in the courſe of their temporal connexions and concerns---all theſe circumſtances, which the warmeſt advocate for modern compaſſion cannot poſſibly refute, and ſome of which fix upon our national character, the deepeſt and moſt indelible ſtains of inhumanity and avarice, injuſtice and oppreſſion, may

" would not be a wicked man amongſt them; and yet " many of them are as bad, if not worſe, than thoſe " who know nothing of the religion they pretend to, " or of the happineſs or miſery they ſpeak of. Are " not the ſame wickedneſſes ſeen among them as among " the worſt of us. They make no conſcience to cheat " and defraud even one another: and where they " have power, they oppreſs without pity. Whoredom " and drunkenneſs, falſeneſs and deceit, lying, curſ- " ing and ſwearing, and calling upon the God they " worſhip to damn each other upon every fooliſh oc- " caſion: theſe and many others are the crimes com- " mon among theſe very people, who tell you, that the " great God will call all men to an account, and reward " or puniſh them according to their works. Can you " think that they *themſelves* believe this?" Biſh. Wilſ. Works, fol. vol. I. p. 95.—Ind. Inſtr.

have contributed, not a little, to defeat this unconfined mercy of the Deity in its gracious intentions, and convincingly account for the ſlow, the defective, and the apparently partial and imperfect progreſs of the Chriſtian diſpenſation.

Prejudiced, and with ſuch juſtice, againſt our perſons, theſe people may, very naturally, deſpiſe our *inſtructions. They

* How much the names of Chriſtian and European are deteſted amongſt theſe people, ſee Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII. b. 1. c. 1. p. 133. 4to. edit.—Complete Syſtem of Geograph. vol. II. p. 539.—Irwin's Voyage, p. 59.

That quarrels and diviſions amongſt the Chriſtians themſelves fatally ſtop the progreſs of Chriſtianity in thoſe countries, ſee Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII. 4to. c. 1. p. 128.—Moſh. Eccl. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 302.—and more at large in the preface to that work.—For the dreadful opinion entertained of Europeans at large, ſee Voy. to the Iſland of Mauritius, p. 103.—The contempt which Indians have for miſſionaries is fully deſcribed in Moſh. Eccl. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 288.

I cannot omit giving here, in the author's own words, an account of the cruelties practiſed upon negroes, that Chriſtians, whoſe characteriſtic ſhould be compaſſion, may bluſh for their undertaking ſo infamous a traffic:

" At

They may, by a fatal and unhappy combination, aſſociate Chriſtianity with our

" At break of day a ſignal of three ſmacks of a whip " calls them to work, each of them betakes himſelf " with his ſpade to the plantations, where they work " almoſt naked in the heat of the ſun. Upon the com- " miſſion of the moſt trifling offence, they are tied " hand and foot to a ladder, the overſeer then comes " with a whip, like a poſtilion's, and gives them fifty, " a hundred, or two hundred laſhes upon the back: " each ſtroke carries off its portion of ſkin: the poor " wretch is then untied, an iron collar with three ſpikes " put round his neck, and he is then ſent back to his " taſk. Some of them are unable to ſit down for a " month after this beating, which puniſhment is in- " flicted with equal ſeverity on women as on men. " There is a law in force, in their favour, which or- " dains that they ſhall receive no more than thirty " laſhes for any one offence; that they ſhall not work " on Sundays; that they ſhall eat meat once a week, " and have a new ſhirt every year, but this law is not " obſerved. Sometimes, when grown too old to labour, " they are turned out to get their bread where they " can. One day I ſaw a poor creature, who was no- " thing but ſkin and bone, cutting off the fleſh of a " dead horſe to eat: it was one ſkeleton devouring ano- " ther. In ſhort, the blacks are ſometimes unable to " endure their hard lot, and give themſelves up to " deſpair. Some hang or poiſon themſelves; others " will

our vices and our paſſions, and prefer their own imperfect faith, at leaſt enjoining honeſty and juſtice, to one, which, with ſuch infinitely ſuperior pretenſions, admits the horrid tempers of diſſimulation and hypocriſy, of cruelty and revenge.

Let us fancy, for a moment, the neceſſary interview betwixt a miſſionary and one of his negro diſciples, when in

" will get into a little boat, and without ſails, pro-
" viſion, or compaſs, hazard a voyage of two hundred
" leagues, to return to Madagaſcar. In general they
" ſecrete themſelves in the woods, where they are
" hunted by parties of ſoldiers, and by other negroes,
" with dogs. Some of the inhabitants form parties of
" pleaſure for this purpoſe: put up a negroe as they
" would a wild beaſt, and if they cannot hunt him
" down, will ſhoot him, cut off his head, and bring it
" in triumph to town upon the end of a ſtick. Of
" this I am an eye witneſs every week. Not a day
" paſſes but both men and women are whipped for
" having broken earthen-ware, for not ſhutting the
" door after them, or ſome ſuch trifling reaſon: and
" when almoſt covered with blood, are rubbed with
" vinegar and ſalt to heal their wounds." See Voy. to the Iſland of Mauritius, Letter 12. p. 100, 101, 102, &c. &c.

the

the noble importance of his office, the eccleſiaſtic would diveſt him of his miſtaken notions, and implant, in his uninformed mind, the principles of Chriſtian faith. What language might one put into the ſavage mouth, and how forcibly might he expoſtulate with his unknown inſtructor, in theſe pathetic terms: "Your faith "may be as excellent as you now repre-"ſent it, but I am guided by your "actions, not merely by your words: "why hath not this belief a greater and "more transforming influence upon your "lives? Why doth it not wholly govern "your * ſentiments and actions, if its "tenets be as amiable as you repreſent "them; and if you be as thoroughly con-"vinced, as you pretend, of its neceſſity "and importance? I was happy in my "native wilds, happy in the hardſhips and "rigours you lament, till you preſumed, "with unrelenting cruelty, to invade

* See Complete Syſtem of Geogr. fol. vol. II. p. 566, 567.

"my

" my repoſe. I envied not your know-
" ledge; I wanted not your wealth; I
" invaded not your property; I diſturbed
" not your enjoyments. If you really,
" as you affect, pity my condition, why
" add to its woe? Why join with my
" luckleſs unpropitious ſtars to conſum-
" mate my diſtreſs; and why rob me of
" the ſweeteſt comfort I poſſeſs, the liber-
" ty of ranging through theſe deſert
" woods without limit or controul?
" If God, as you deſcribe him, be the
" general impartial parent of mankind;
" if men, in all the nations of the world,
" be equally his children, and equally
" objects of his paternal care, and if,
" moreover, the ſacred religion you pro-
" feſs, inculcates univerſal humanity and
" juſtice, whence is it that you take ſuch
" unwarrantable liberties with a part of
" the ſpecies, who wear the mark of the
" Divinity upon them, as well as your-
" ſelves? Why ſell them as your cattle,

" and

" and treat them as your * ſlaves? Why
" come from ſuch a diſtance, at the hazard
" of

* For a full account of the African or ſlave trade, ſee Poſtlethw. Dict. of Arts and Com. vol. I. p. 25. art. Africa. " Whether (ſays the intelligent writer) in-
" ſtead of making ſlaves of theſe people, it would not
" rather become ſuch nations, as aſſume to themſelves
" the name and character of Chriſtians, to give them
" a reliſh for the bleſſings of life, by extending traffic
" into their country in the largeſt degree it will admit,
" and introducing among them the more civilized arts
" and cuſtoms, may be ſubmitted to conſideration." We cannot, indeed, reaſonably expect that the goſpel ſhould make any conſiderable progreſs amongſt this unhappy people, while our conduct towards them is ſavage and inhuman. This ſpecies of merchandize hath appeared to many candid and enquiring men utterly indefenſible upon any principles or laws of the goſpel. " To do to others, as we would wiſh they ſhould do
" unto us," is a conſpicuous and a golden rule in that ſacred diſpenſation, which forcibly, and, I think, incontrovertibly militates againſt this horrid practice. Humanity is touched with the diſtreſſing thought of ſelling fellow-creatures, like beaſts of the field; and ſo cruelly treating thoſe, who, equally with us, are formed for eternity, have certainly one common Father, and one common end. The image of the Deity impreſſed

on

" of your lives, to make us feel the
" rigours of your mercy, and the cruel-
" ties

on theſe men, the " os *ſublime," vouchſafed to them under all their other pitiable diſadvantages, ſhould ſurely be treated with a greater reverence, and challenge more of our attention and reſpect. Providence, it is alledged, hath, by its great unchangeable fiat, doomed them to ſlavery. Deſcendants of Ham, unhappy children of an unhappy ſire, heaven itſelf hath poſitively decreed them to be " ſervants of ſervants." But is it evident from hence, that *Chriſtians* will be juſtified in becoming the horrid and unfeeling inſtruments of ſuch a diſpenſation? The character expected from a diſciple of Jeſus, is, that he ſhould ſympathetically weep at their ſorrow, and, inſtead of aggravating, alleviate their woe. Heaven, likewiſe, certainly foreſaw and fore-ordained, that our Saviour ſhould be crucified for the tranſgreſſions of the world: but as this appointment and fore-knowledge did not compel the Jews to be the cruel and involuntary actors of ſuch an horrid tragedy;

* Milton hath deſcribed this characteriſtic diſtinction of human nature in very elegant lines, when he introduces the firſt pair as contraſted to all other parts of the creation:

Two of far nobler ſhape, erect and tall,
God-like erect, with native honour clad,
In naked majeſty, ſeem'd lords of all;
And worthy ſeem'd, for in their looks divine,
The image of their glorious Maker ſhone.

Milt. Par. Loſt.

ſo

" ties of your compaſſion? If it be an
" eſtabliſhed article in your belief, that
" we

ſo, neither will it acquit them from that ſeverity of puniſhment, which the ſpilling of ſuch precious blood evidently deſerved. Whatever were the councils and the providence of God, they acted from the principles of free agency and choice, and therefore, independently of the divine plan, their guilt hath, in its nature, all the poſſible aggravations of the moſt hardened infidelity, premeditated malice, cruelty, and murder.

It hath been alledged further in vindication of this inhuman commerce, that our purchaſing theſe ſlaves emancipates them from the infinitely greater hardſhips of their native condition, reſcues them from vaſtly more tyrannic maſters, and gives them the bleſſings of a Chriſtian country and a Chriſtian education. Theſe are very ſpecious plauſible arguments. Some degree of truth likewiſe may be couched under them. But the queſtion is, Whether the happineſs or advantage of theſe negroes be the grand and primary object we attend to in our connexions with them? If it be, it ſeems rather extraordinary, that inſtead of being treated with the greateſt rigour and ſeverity of labour, they are not inſtructed in the principles of our religion, and in the nature of their duties to God and to men. It is amazing we do not allow them greater leiſure and opportunities for attending to divine things, and ſecuring the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls.

If,

" we ſhould treat all men exactly as we " wiſh to be treated in return, how inconſiſtently

If, on the contrary, the inordinate love of gain be the firſt and actuating principle of our minds; and if theſe bleſſings, reaped by the negroes, be only accidental and ſecondary in their nature, ariſing from circumſtances of climate and religion, not our intentions, this boaſted humanity towards them falls to the ground, and, I think, we are not cleared from the adduced charge of avarice, oppreſſion, barbarity, and guilt.

Wilſon, in his Remarks on the Influence of Climate, hath this obſervation, " Whether the conduct of the in- " habitants, in temperate climates, in forcing thoſe of " the torrid zone from their natural indolence and " ſtupor into a ſtate of greater activity, is culpable or " not, we leave to be determined by others; but it " appears to us, if cultivation and improvement are to " be proſecuted in theſe climates, ſlavery, to a certain " degree, is indiſpenſably neceſſary." Obſ. on Clim. p. 285. Philoſophical remark, however, hath but ſmall connexion with the dictates of religion. Plauſible reaſons are eaſily adduced to juſtify a practice, founded in intereſt, and recommended by national policy and views. But the queſtion is, Whether either theſe commercial or political advantages will bear the cool reflexion of a religious hour; and whether the approach of eternity and death may not change our ideas, and ſhew us their deluſion.

" conſiſtently do you act, in thus cooly
" and deliberately injuring a people who
" never

But admitting it a real advantage to theſe negroes to be enſlaved by us Chriſtians, yet, if we have but ſo much as a ſpark of Chriſtianity remaining in the breaſt, they ſhould, ſurely, in ſome degree, partake of our advantages, in return for their hard and unpropitious ſituation. We ſhould have them carefully inſtructed and baptized, conſidering them as equally born with us for an immortal exiſtence. If Providence intends us ſo *materially* to benefit by " † their carnal things, the labour " of their hands and the ſweat of their brow," it is certainly intended that " we ſhould miniſter to them of our " ſpiritual things." Objections, I know, have been made to their being baptized, as if it would too much emancipate them from the fetters of ſlavery, and give them too aſpiring notions of their own independence. It hath been ſuggeſted, that, after their introduction within the pale of the church, we could no longer treat them as private property, to be either bought or diſpoſed of at our pleaſure. It is truly ſhocking, that objections of ſo cruel and inhuman a nature ſhould ever have come from Chriſtians. They are, however, fully and elegantly anſwered in the Biſhop of London's excellent Paſtoral Letters. That diſtinguiſhed prelate is clearly of opinion, that Chriſtianity doth not peculiarly alter their external circumſtances and condition: that, according to its expreſs declarations, every man is to abide in the condition " wherein he is called, whether § he

† 1 Corinth. ix. 11. § 1 Corinth. vii. 20.

" never even ſo much as thought of mo-
" leſting your repoſe. If ſympathy to
" the

" be bond or free."—They are apologies, however, I think, we cannot make at a future tribunal. The cries of theſe enſlaved creatures may then aſcend to God, and the juſtice of their complaints " may enter into the " ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth;" in a land " where " † violence ſhall be no more heard;" the man of *violence* ſhall not be admitted; and the opulence and power which here have tempted us to oppreſſion and abuſe, will " vaniſh as a dream," and leave us deſolate, unprotected individuals before the ſupreme majeſty of God.

I would only make this further obſervation, that the argument which repreſents them as ſo unhappy in their native country, is more plauſible than real. It appears, from authors of credit and authenticity, that this is not the caſe. See an Hiſtorical Account of Guinea, with an Inquiry into the Riſe and Progreſs of the Slave Trade, by Anth. Benezet, printed at Philadelphia, 1771. But without entering into the particulars of his deſcription, which would be really too numerous for inſertion here, I ſhall cloſe this note with the ſentiments of the great and immortal Monteſquieu on the Subject of the Slave Trade: " It is neither uſeful," obſerves that penetrating genius " for the maſter nor the ſlave: for the ſlave, be-
" cauſe he can do nothing through principle or virtue:
" for the maſter, becauſe he contracts with his ſlave all
" ſorts of bad habits; inſenſibly accuſtoms himſelf to
" want all moral virtues; becomes haughty, haſty,

† Iſaiah lx. 18.

hard-

" the unfortunate be another of your
" doctrines, there is every thing in my lot
" to claim its attentions; nothing to pro-
" voke your injuſtice or oppreſſion: and
" how, upon any pleas, can you reconcile
" it with your principles thus to harraſs
" and diſtreſs a ſet of men, already too
" unfortunate, and erect for yourſelves,
" upon their miſeries and groans, *pa-
" laces elegantly cieled with cedar, and
" painted with vermilion? where, un-

" hard-hearted, paſſionate, voluptuous, and cruel."— See further ſome excellent and pathetic ſentiments upon the ſubject in a Voyage to the Iſland of Mauritius, Letter 12. p. 108, where, after wondering that the infamous commerce in ſlaves hath not more engaged the reprehenſion of philoſophers, he thus concludes his letter, " Ye women of ſenſibility and ſentiment, who
" weep at the affecting ſtory of a novel, or the repreſen-
" tation of a tragedy, know, that what conſtitutes your
" chiefeſt delight, (meaning the elegancies of dreſs and
" the table) is moiſtened with the tears, and dyed with
" the blood of men. The ladies ſhould be reminded,
" that they ſtand indebted to theſe negroes for the beau-
" tiful colours which embelliſh their dreſs, for ſugar,
" coffee, and chocolate."

* Jerem. chap. xxii. 14.

" mindful of their ſorrows, you can ſwim
" in the LAP of affluence and eaſe,
" * chaunt to the ſound of the viol and
" the harp, and drown each better and
" religious ſentiment in wine and diſſi-
" pation. If this be Chriſtianity, I wiſh
" not its directions; if ſuch be the goſ-
" pel, may this breaſt be ever ſteeled
" againſt its injunctions: and till you
" yourſelves are examples of your pre-
" cepts, leave me, I beſeech you, to my
" native ignorance, to the *honeſt*, though
" *untutored*, feelings of my heart."

But let us grant, for a moment, to the ſceptical diſputer, what never can be proved, that the Deity did not intend Chriſtianity, I mean the common and external communication of it, to be univerſal; ſtill his glorious attributes of a general wiſdom, juſtice, and compaſſion may remain unimpeached; ſtill the Redeemer, though in a different kind of manner, may be the medium of happineſs, and the inſtrument of ſalvation to many

* Iſaiah v. 12.

people

people and nations, who never heard of his name: "he is the Saviour" (ſaith the ſcripture) "of all," even the moſt barbarous and unenlightened ſavages, but "* eſpe- "cially of them that believe:" "† no "one can come unto God without him." Indeed upon the principles of the original covenant betwixt heaven and mankind, which literally ſeems to have denounced death to the firſt diſobedience, none can plead a right, at leaſt ſince the unhappy moment of the fall, even to the common bleſſings of exiſtence, independently of his reſtoring power: reſembling in the moral, the great and univerſal principle of Attraction in the material World, he draws, he unites, he reconciles to heaven, by a powerful, by a conſtant, though inſenſible influence, even the moſt dark and uninformed people, whoſe hearts will at all aſſimilate with Deity, and who poſſeſs but a ſpark of that celeſtial ‡ ſpirit which aſcends to the ſkies.

* Epheſ. i. 10. Tim. iv. 10. † John xiv. 6.
‡ Igneus illis ſpiritus adeſt & cœleſtis origo.

He, therefore, may have ſheep, at preſent outwardly undiſtinguiſhed, but nevertheleſs the objects of his paſtoral attention, which, if they hear his voice, in this imperfect manner, hereafter, at the conſummation of all things, he will aſſuredly bring with him; and there "ſhall "be one fold under one Shepherd."

As an illuſtration of the arguments, or rather the conjectures, which hitherto have been adduced, let us reaſon cloſely, only for a moment, on the attributes of God, and on what we have a right (if the expreſſion be allowable) as rational and human creatures to expect at his hands; concluding in the faireſt way of analogy, from his viſible conduct in the government of the univerſe, and the appearances of things about us. It ſeems incumbent upon God, wherever he confers the privilege of Being, to communicate likewiſe the poſſibility of an happineſs adapted to the infinitely various

ſenti-

ſentiments, feelings, and ſituations of the creatures he hath formed: If we look into life, inconteſtible experience tells us that he hath; that ſuch is his gracious, invariable plan; not a fowl of the air, but, from perception of his goodneſs, warbles its acknowledgments, to a certain, though inviſible and unknown, Benefactor; not an animal is formed, however humble in its kind, without a portion of the bleſſings ſuited to its nature, and wiſely adapted to its capacity and deſtination; not a flower of the field, and not a lily grows, which doth not, by its exquiſite beauty and contexture, continually proclaim his admirable power; and not a planet or a ſtar in the canopy of heaven, but ſings, though ſilent, its Creator's goodneſs, and, by its radiant ſplendors utters all his * praiſe. To confer an exact ſimilarity of † bliſs is not neceſſary

* How beautiful and animated is that hymn in the Spectator? Vol. VI. N° 465.

† See Young's Def. of Revelat. vol. II. c. 4. p. 251.

to his juſtice, any more than it is to have bleſſed and adorned each bird of the air, or every fiſh of the ſea, with preciſely the ſame reſplendency of plumage, or beauty of ſcales, or exactneſs of proportions; any more than it is to have equally illuminated every human mind with genius or with ſcience, or to have placed each individual amongſt the liſts of mankind, under a ſimilar and unvaried particularity of ſituation, rank or condition, government or laws. It * appears on the contrary, the deſignation of his providence to diverſify, as much as poſſible, the nature of his bleſſings, and, in ten thouſand different ſhapes, communicate † enjoyment: to this admirable, benevo-

* For the prodigious varieties, even of the human ſpecies, ſee Foſt. Obſerv. in a Voy. round the World, ſol. vol. III.

† Concerning the divine plan of diffuſing happineſs, as much as poſſible, by an infinite variety and gradations in exiſtence, ſee Mr. Addiſon's moſt excellent Speculation, —Spect. Vol. VII. No. 519. " The exuberant and over-
" flowing goodneſs of the ſupreme Being, whoſe mercy
" extends to all his works, is plainly ſeen from his hav-
" ing

benevolent principle, it is, that the univerſe, at large, owes its infinite variegation

" ing made ſo very little matter, at leaſt, that falls " within our knowledge, that does not ſwarm with life; " nor is his goodneſs leſs ſeen in the *diverſity* than in " the *multitude* of living creatures. Had he only made " one ſpecies of animals, none of the reſt would have " enjoyed the happineſs of exiſtence: he hath, therefore, " ſpecified in his creation, every degree of life, every " capacity of being. The whole chaſm in nature, from " a plant to a man, is filled up with divers kinds of " creatures, riſing one over another, by ſuch a gentle " and eaſy aſcent, that the little tranſitions and deviations from one ſpecies to another, are almoſt inſenſible: the intermediate ſpace is ſo well huſbanded " and managed, that there is ſcarce a degree of perception, which does not appear in ſome one part of the " world of life."—Judge Hales, in his Primit. Orig. of Mankind, hath theſe juſt and ſtriking ſentiments on this particular ſubject: " We ſee a multitude of creatures between us, and the loweſt ranks of animals, " ſpecifically and gradually one below another; and " doubtleſs there are or may be many ranks of beings " intermediate between the glorious God and mankind, " that have ſpecified gradations one above another. " We may obſerve, in the creatures of a ſubordinate " rank to us, how the more inferior and ignoble part " bear ſomewhat of the image of the ſuperior, a kind " of ſhadow or adumbration of thoſe perfections, that

" in

tion of excellence and ſplendor, beauty and perfection: that rich aſſemblage of produc-

" in the ſuperior are more perfect, not only by a " gradually, but by a ſpecifically differing perfection. " We ſee in ſome metals an analogical reſemblance of " thoſe vital effects of vegetables, growth, digeſtion, " and augmentation, that is more perfectly in plants " and perfect vegetables. We ſee in vegetables a re- " ſemblance of appetition, election, generation, and, " in ſome of them, an imperfect image of that univer- " ſal ſenſe of feeling, which we find more perfectly in " animals. We find in animals, eſpecially ſome of " them, as foxes, dogs, horſes, aſſes, and elephants, " not only perception, phantaſy, and memory, (com- " mon to moſt, if not all animals) but ſomething of " ſagacity, providence, diſciplinableneſs, and ſome- " thing like to a diſcurſive ratiocination, bearing an " analogy or imperfect reſemblance of what we find, " though in a degree, ſpecifically more excellent in the " human nature."—To the ſame purpoſe, ſee Tillot. fol. vol. II. ſerm. 91.

Mr. Locke, in his Eſſay on the Human Underſtanding, hath very beautifully deſcanted on this thought: " Thus finding, in all parts of the creation, that fall " under human obſervation, that there is a gradual " connexion of one with another, without any great " or diſcernible gaps between in all that great " variety of things we ſee in the world, which are ſo " cloſely linked together, that in the ſeveral ranks of " being,

productions in the vegetable, mineral, and animal kingdoms, as well as in the higher

" being, it is not eaſy to diſcover the bounds betwixt
" them, we have reaſon to be perſuaded, that by ſuch
" gentle ſteps, things aſcend upwards in degrees of
" perfection. It is an hard matter to ſay where ſen-
" ſible and rational begin, and where inſenſible and ir-
" rational end. And who is there quick-ſighted enough
" to determine preciſely which is the loweſt ſpecies of
" living things, and which the firſt of thoſe which have
" no life. Things, as far as we can obſerve, leſſen and
" augment as the quantity does in a regular cone,
" where, though there be a manifeſt odds betwixt the
" bigneſs of the diameter at a remote diſtance, yet the
" difference between the upper and under, where they
" touch one another, is hardly diſcernible. The dif-
" ference is exceeding great between ſome men and
" ſome animals; but if we will compare the underſtand-
" ings and abilities of ſome men, and of ſome brutes,
" we ſhall find ſo little difference, that it will be hard
" to ſay, that that of the man is either clearer or larger.
" Obſerving, I ſay, ſuch gradual and gentle deſcents
" downwards in thoſe parts of the creation that are
" beneath man, the rule of analogy may make it pro-
" bable, that it is ſo alſo in things above us, and our
" obſervation; and that there are ſeveral ranks of in-
" telligent beings, excelling us, in ſeveral degrees of
" perfection, aſcending upwards towards the infinite
" perfections of the Creator, by gentle ſteps and diſ-
" ferences,

higher departments of mankind, which cannot but inſpire every philoſophic mind

" ferences, that are, every one, at no great diſtance " from the next to it." Lock on Hum. Underſt. vol. II. p. 286. chap. on Deg. of Aſſent.—" This divine con- " trivance (ſays an ingenious writer) is viſible in the " conſtitution of the animals themſelves, which are " not only in their frames obſerved to be moſt wonder- " fully and artificially made, but to be moſt wiſely " adapted to the ſituation which they have in Being, " and to be moſt providentially furniſhed with the means " of ſubſiſting, and the inſtruments of defending or " ſecuring themſelves. And if from individuals we " extend our views to every ſpecies of animals, and " eſpecially if we comprehend that vaſt connexion and " ſubordination which are eſtabliſhed among them, " this will open a wide ſcene of the bountiful profuſion " of happineſs through the univerſe, and exhibit an " extenſive and uniform appearance of a nice and ini- " mitable œconomy in diſpenſing it. For both the " number of the individuals of each ſpecies is generally " obſerved to be as great as can, commodiouſly, ſubſiſt " together; and the ſpecies themſelves are obſerved to " be ſo diverſified in their kinds, and to exceed one " another in ſuch a regular gradation, that as much " being and happineſs is communicated, on the whole, " as can well conſiſt in ſuch a compaſs or extent of " creation." Tunſt. Lect. on Natur. and Rev. Relig. p. 102.

See an ingenious treatiſe, juſt publiſhed, entitled Diſquiſitions on ſeveral Subjects, by the ingenious Soame Jenyns, Diſq. 1.

with

* with aſtoniſhment, and with veneration: that "concordia † diſcors," if I may ſo expreſs it, in the nature, the properties, the appearances of things, which, in a happy combination, conſtitutes that univerſe we contemplate with ſuch wonder, and is the ſource of uſefulneſs, of ſymmetry, and magnificence in the creation.

The happineſs of any individual creature, depends not wholly on its reſembling that, in kind or in degree, which is conferred on another, but ſolely on its being properly adapted to its own peculiar feelings, and ſuited to its own exigencies and wants. If my portion of enjoyment be abundantly ſufficient for my particular formation, and great as my capacities are able to admit, it is no diminution from this allotment of felicity, that another is poſſeſſed of vaſtly more exquiſite feelings and ca-

* O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. Pſalm civ. 24.

† Ovid's Met.

pacities,

pacities, and conſequently bleſſed by the generous impartial parent of the world with a nicer and more elevated kind of ſatisfaction. In a probationary ſtate, moreover, it ſhould, in juſtice, be obſerved, that the conflicts and the trials of ſuperior ſenſibility are generally confeſſed to be ſeverer in proportion: ſuch people feel intenſely many little rubs and calamities of life, which affect not men of leſs delicate emotions, or a firmer organization: the tears of ſenſibility are even proverbial; and the ſorrows, which it bears with the ſecrecy of heroiſm, behind the curtain of * retirement, more than can be told. In this view of things, therefore, happineſs to thoſe who chuſe to embrace it, will be equally, and impartially, and univerſally diffuſed, exactly like the manna dropped from heaven upon the hungry Iſraelites: "† He who "gathereth much will have nothing over,

* Conſilium vultu tegit ac ſpem fronte ſerenat. Virg.

† Exod. xvi. 18.

See Mrs. Greville's beautiful Ode to Indifference.

"and

"and he who gathereth little will feel "no lack." The feelings of mankind being ſuited to their ſtate, their circumſtances, and their bleſſings, is the appointment which reſtrains the idea of a murmur, and ſhews the Deity impartially benevolent, and as wiſe as he is merciful through all the various range and infinity of being; and Heaven, or the ſtate of future retribution, will, upon this principle, be preciſely what it is deſcribed in the ſcriptures, a receptacle for different orders of glorified creatures, for different degrees of piety and virtue, different tints of perfection: it will be, in ſhort, what our Saviour poſitively declares it is, "A *mul- "tiplicity of manſions;" each will have an happineſs, as great, at leaſt, as his wiſhes can †ſuggeſt, or his faculties admit

* John xiv. 2.

† Our enjoyment in a future life will probably be very much regulated and determined by the various taſtes we have formed upon earth, and the advances we have made in ſentiment and knowledge. Actuated, as it were, with an inſtinctive hope of a paradiſe to come, every different nation, not enlightened by the goſpel, and, indeed,

mit of; where, to borrow an alluſion from the hemiſphere above us, though the

indeed, in ſome degree, even thoſe which are, deck it with ſuch flowers as are moſt pleaſing to the eye, or regaling to the ſenſes, and ſketch it out into ſuch imagery of ſcenes as are moſt agreeable, ſtriking, and attractive to their own imaginations.

The American Indians expect to be tranſlated to a delightful country, where they ſhall always have a clear unclouded ſky, and enjoy a perpetual ſpring; where the foreſts will abound with game, and the lakes with fiſh; which may be taken without requiring a painful exertion of ſkill, or a laborious purſuit. In ſhort, that they ſhall live for ever in thoſe regions, and enjoy every ſatisfaction which delights them here, but to a greater degree. Buſch. Geog. vol. II. fol. p. 526.

Virgil's deſcription of Elyſium hath ſomething in it of this luſcious and ſenſual kind:——

" Devenere lucos lætos & amæna vireta
" Fortunatorum nemorum ſedeſque beatas:
" Largior hìc campos æther & lumine veſtit
" Purpureo, ſolemque ſuum ſua ſidera norunt."

The Greenlanders, actuated by the ſame principle, imagine that their elyſium will be placed in the abyſſes of the ocean, becauſe in this life they acquire the moſt and beſt of their ſuſtenance from the boſom of the ſea. Crantz's Hiſt. of Greenland, vol. I. c. 5. p. 201. The Braſilians believe that their ſouls ſhall be tranſlated after their departure from the body to pleaſant regions and vales, placed, as they ſay, betwixt mountains, where

the Chriſtian, perhaps, for the brightneſs of his glory, and the ſplendour of his virtues, may be liker to the ſun, which irradiates the ſphere, and ſheds his genial influence on every created object, yet the * Pagan, or the Turk, thoſe whoſe minds were not equally informed, and, of conſequence, whoſe morals were not equally refined, may, ſurely, like ſome diſtant † ſtars, twinkle with a feebler luſtre,

where they are to enjoy great pleaſure, as ſinging, dancing, &c. Collect. of Voy. and Diſc. vol. II. p. 14. 4to. The inhabitants of the South Sea iſlands fancy that their elyſium ſhall, hereafter, conſiſt in feaſting upon bread, fruit, and meat, which require no dreſſing. Foſter's Obſer. in a Voy. round the World.

The negroes in the Antilles Iſlands imagine that their future heaven will conſiſt in returning to their native country. General Syſtem of Geog. fol. vol. II. p. 708. —Article Antilles Iſlands.

* See Young's Def. of Rev. vol. II. c. 4.

† This opinion, indeed, contrary as it may be to the narrow and uncharitable ſyſtem of ſome writers on the ſubject, appears to be founded on the ſolid baſis only of common juſtice in the Deity, and an impartial compaſſion. " Quæ per invincibilem ignorantiam patrantur, im-
" putari non poſſunt. Quia neque dirigere actionem

luſtre, or glimmer with a fainter ray: while all are glorious and uſeful in their ſpheres,

" poſſumus, ubi intellectus lumen non prælucet: præ-
" ſupponitur tale lumen ſibi hominem non potuiſſe
" comparare neque quo minus poſſet, in culpa fuiſſe."
Puff. de Off. Lib. 1. c. 1. §. 20.

Various, indeed, and frequent have been the diſputes concerning the ſalvation of the heathen world. The infinity of ſpeculations, which this ſubject hath occaſioned, is a very ſtrong and melancholy proof, how buſy men will be in arranging the ſalvation of the remoteſt nations, rather than in attending to the probability of their own. Though in a ſtate of conjecture, like the preſent, nothing can be abſolutely determined, upon a ſubject, where not much is revealed; yet many authors, who have caſually glanced at it, have left ſuch ſentiments on record, as do honour, at once, to their hearts and underſtandings, and give, at leaſt, ſome ſmall elucidation to the embarraſſing inquiry.

Nicholls, in his Conference with a Theiſt, ſeems to think, that though the heathens have no claim whatever to a Chriſtian's heaven, or diſtinguiſhed manſion of glory, yet the Almighty may and will inveſt them with an happineſs apportioned at leaſt to their ſincerity and virtue. See Conf. with a Theiſt, p. 2. 79.—And the Bp. of Carliſle's Theor. of Rel. p. 190.

" What then", (ſays another keen and penetrating reaſoner) " ſhall we believe Turks, Jews, Heathens,
" Atheiſts themſelves (if there be any ſuch) in an
" equal

ſpheres, and equally conſpire to magnify the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Being, who

" equal poſſibility of ſalvation with the unerring " Chriſtian? Shall we ſave all beaſts, of what kind ſo- " ever, clean or unclean, in that myſtical ark, the " church of God? Certainly, in the two contrary ex- " ceſſes of this matter, that on the ſide of mercy, hath " the appearance of greater ſafety; and I had rather " think with Origen, that the devils themſelves, by " the exceſſive kindneſs of their Judge, ſhall, at laſt, " be exempted from damnation, than that he himſelf " ſhall be damned for that opinion. But as to this " their objection, I believe, firſt, that Reaſon itſelf will " declare to every man in the world, that he ought to " adhere to the Chriſtian, rather than to any other " religion whatſoever, if all things be propounded to " him in a clear and an impartial manner: and this, " whoſoever ſhall deny, I dare confidently affirm, it is " impoſſible for him to be a Chriſtian. But becauſe " there are a thouſand accidents, which hinder the " greateſt part of the world from the advantages of ſo " fair a propoſal, hence it comes to paſs, that ſo ſmall a " part of mankind hath ſubmitted to the obedience of " the Chriſtian faith. And to condemn all thoſe " millions of perſons (many millions for one that is to " be ſaved) is ſo wild an uncharitableneſs, that few have " been ſo barbarouſly ſevere as to be guilty of it. And, " therefore, thoſe whoſe ignorance in theſe matters hath " been invincible, they have left to the hands of God,

who hath conferred on them all, collectively and ſeparately, their particular diſtinctions.

" without declaring a *definitive* opinion either of their " ſafety or perdition. Now if we conſider, rightly, " what ignorance is to be accounted invincible, we ſhall, " by this means, reſtore the greateſt part of mankind " into an hopeful and comfortable condition: and none, " even amongſt the worſt religions, will be left to a " certain ruin, but ſuch whoſe conſciences have been " neglected, or forced aſide by thoſe who ought to have " been guided by them; and ſuch, who can have no " plea againſt the rigour of their ſentence, becauſe they " deſerted themſelves, as well as God. And the diſobe- " dience of men to their own conſcience is not only in " things of practice, but alſo of belief and ſpeculation, " though not in ſo evident and immediate a manner, " by ſuffering themſelves to be deceived by the inſen- " ſible operations of intereſt and prejudice.

" Nor does it follow from hence, that Chriſt is not the " only ſource and cauſe of eternal felicity: for I acknow- " ledge there is no other name under heaven, by which " men can hope for ſalvation. But I may very well be- " lieve withal, that there are ſecret and wonderful ways " by which God may be pleaſed to apply his merits to " mankind, beſides thoſe direct, open, and ordinary " ones of baptiſm and confeſſion, &c. &c. &c." Treat. on Hum. Reaſ. p. 21.—For further, ſtrong, and excellent arguments upon this ſubject, ſee a work, entituled, The Strength and Weakneſs of Human Reaſon, p. 105.

&

tinctions. It were cruelty in opinion to exclude even Heathens from the preſence of their God, becauſe not equally inſtructed with ourſelves, if innocence hath been the intention of their hearts, and their beſt informed reaſon and judgment their direction: and one cannot ſentence them to regions of deſpair, becauſe it appears their misfortune, and not their fault, to be unhappy children of ignorant unhappy ſires.

It may, poſſibly, be ſaid of them, in the language of ſcripture, that they are "* ſtrangers to the covenant of promiſe, "that they are aliens from the common-

& paſſim.—"As to the heathens," (ſays the learned and pious Biſhop of London) "though the light of reaſon is "but dim, yet they, who have no better light to walk "by, and who *honeſtly* make uſe of that, as the only "guide God has given them, cannot fail to be merci-"fully dealt with by infinite juſtice and goodneſs."—Dr. Whitby is very explicit upon this ſubject, Com. upon the Rom. 2 fol. vol. p. 11. Theſe remarks are miſcellaneouſly offered to the private judgment and reflexions of the reader.

* Epheſ. ii, 12.

" wealth of Iſrael, without hope, and " without God in the world:" and, therefore, that they cannot claim any covenanted mercy: but humanity is ſhocked with the deſcription of their caſe; and where compaſſion " ſtands aghaſt," the God, " whoſe mercies and compaſ- " ſions fail not," ſurely will forgive.

To limit the divine indulgence to ourſelves, to communities or nations, or reſtrain its influences from any part of the world, where Chriſtianity is not externally profeſſed, were a narrow and unfeeling ſyſtem of ſelfiſhneſs and pride: to imagine that much goodneſs may not " † bluſh unſeen" in the vale of uncultivated ignorance and ſuperſtition, or, that, in ſuch various and extenſive countries, there are not hearts, which, if fully ripened by a genial ſun, would have cheriſhed and produced the richeſt fruits and harveſts of the goſpel, is betraying a mind little acquainted with the hiſtory of

† Gray's Elegy in a Country Church-Yard.

men,

men, and leſs dilated with philanthropy or candour, or the generoſity of ſpeculation. It is ſtrangely limiting the goodneſs and univerſal preſence of the Deity, judging from the little ſpeck of earth we inhabit, and fancying, like the uninſtructed ruſtic, that, perhaps, the ſun of heaven may not ſhine, the refreſhing rains of the firmament deſcend, or dews diſtil for the purpoſes of vegetation in other quarters of the globe: and to ſuppoſe that theſe unformed, and but embryo virtues, will not meet at a future tribunal, with their proper retribution, their minute and exact diſcriminations of reward, is either queſtioning the juſtice and impartiality of God, or his wiſdom and his penetration; eſpecially when we moreover take into the reckoning, that, amongſt many people, where Chriſtianity is not adopted or received, yet a fragment of the goſpel may be gathered in their climes, much excellent morality is mixed with their faith, which, though

conſiderably * debaſed by an alloy of ridiculous traditional deluſions, yet generally

* The religious opinions of the more poliſhed and enlightened heathens are amazingly exact. A light, thus ſhining from a ſuppoſed dark place, dazzles us with unexpected ſplendours. Homer hath interwoven into the different parts of his immortal poem almoſt every ſcriptural attribute of God. "He believed" (ſays an elegant writer) "the unity, ſupremacy, omnipotence, "and omniſcience of the divine nature. He conſiders "God as the Creator and Diſpoſer of all things; his "power, wiſdom, juſtice, mercy, and truth are incul-"cated in various parts of the Iliad and Odyſſey; the "immortality of the ſoul, a future ſtate of rewards and "puniſhments, and moſt of the principles of ſound "divinity, are to be found in his writings."—Wood's Eſſay on the Gen. and Writ. of Hom. p. 127.—The ſtoic philoſophy was exceedingly refined, and propoſed to its votaries the very imitation of the Deity himſelf; an endeavour highly conſonant to the preſcriptions of the goſpel. The duties of juſtice, truth, fortitude, temperance, humility, benevolence, ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and reliance on his providence, patience, induſtry, and acquieſcence with our condition in life; and, even the hardeſt of goſpel injunctions, forgiveneſs of our enemies, are very repeatedly and forcibly inculcated in the elegant pages of Cicero and Epictetus, Plato and Marcus Antoninus.

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rally leads them to the pious acknowledgment of a God, a providence, of a future

The Roman poet's ſyſtem of divinity, likewiſe, was worthy of himſelf. In the ſixth Æneid, which repreſents the condition of the deceaſed in another world, amazing diſcrimination and judgment are obſerved, and rewards or puniſhments are, very nicely, apportioned to their merits, or their crimes. He tells us, that people were happy or miſerable, or placed in a middle ſtate of purification after death, according to their behaviour here upon earth; and that the happineſs of the bleſſed conſiſted in manly pleaſures, and the exerciſes of their underſtanding. The conditions, alſo, of admiſſion to theſe happy manſions, are deſcribed in a manner the moſt juſt and rational, conſiſting in piety to the gods, and moral inoffenſive behaviour towards men:

" Hic manus ob patriam pugnando vulnera paſſi
" Quique ſacerdotes caſti, dum vita manebat
" Quique pii vates & Phœbo digna locuti,
" Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes,
" Quique ſui memores alios fecere merendo,
" Omnibus his niveâ cinguntur tempora vitta."

Æn. lib. 6. v. 660, &c.

" Hic quibus inviſi fratres, dum vita manebat
" Pulſatuſve parens aut fraus innexa clienti,
" Aut qui divitiis ſoli incubuere repertis
" Hic partem poſuere ſuis, quæ maxima turba eſt," &c.

How noble and refined were the ſentiments of Socrates, as given us by Cicero: " Et quum pene in manu jam " mortiſe-

" mortiferum illud teneret poculum locutus ita eſt, ut
" non ad mortem trudi, verum in cœlum videretur
" aſcendere. Ita enim cenſebat itaque diſſeruit duas
" eſſe vias, dupliceſque curſus animarum e corpore ex-
" cedentium. Homines qui ſe humanis vitiis contami-
" nâſſent & ſe totos libidinibus dedidiſſent, quibus cæ-
" cati, velut domeſticis vitiis atque flagitiis ſe inqui-
" naviſſent, vel in republica violanda fraudes inexpia-
" biles concepiſſent, his devium quoddam iter eſſe, ſe-
" cluſum a concilio Deorum. Qui autem ſe integros
" caſtoſque ſervaviſſent, quibuſque fuiſſet minima cum
" corporibus contagio, ſeſeque ab his, ſemper, ſevoca-
" viſſent eſſentque in corporibus humanis vitam imitati
" Deorum, his ad illos, a quibus eſſent profecti, redi-
" tum facilem patere." Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. 1. §. 112.

It may be urged, with plauſibility, that theſe are but the ſentiments of the refined few, who had made very ſingular improvements in learning and philoſophy, while the greater part of men were overwhelmed with ignorance, or wading through the deepeſt error and ſuperſtition. But it appears, from very ſtrong and impartial repreſentations, that the generality of modern Heathens ſtill preſerve, amid all the deplorable darkneſs of their ſtate, the great fundamental principles of one ſupreme God, a providence, and future ſtate. See Stackh. Body of Div. part 3. c. 8. §. 23. p. 528.—Millar's Hiſt. of the Propag. c. 5, &c.—Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. IX. b. 14. c. 4. 4to.—Crantz's Hiſt. of Greenland, vol. I. b. 3. c. 5. §. 38.—Foſter's Obſerv. vol. III. p. 534. and p. 605.—General Syſtem of Geog. fol. vol. II. p. 523.——I do not want to prove that theſe religious ſentiments of theirs ſpring merely from the light of nature: this is not, indeed,

future exiſtence, and many other intereſting points of * revelation.

Men, in ſhort, will not univerſally be judged by the goſpel, as they have not, univerſally, enjoyed its directions. It is evident from ſcripture, that they who have had no promulged law, " † will be " a law unto themſelves:" their eternal fate will be decided by thoſe characters of right and wrong, which are written by the finger of Deity upon their hearts.

indeed, my own private perſuaſion. I make no doubt but this knowledge, which they have, is, primarily, derived from heaven, and the reſult of tradition. So far it is a member, though but a maimed and diſtorted one, of Chriſtianity itſelf. I would only wiſh to be underſtood as inſinuating, that, though all are not bleſſed with the precepts of the goſpel in their clearneſs and extent, yet a degree of this light hath ſhone upon all, and may, probably, direct them better, than, on the firſt view of things, we are apt to conceive, to the regions of immortal happineſs and glory.

* See Sherlock's Diſcourſes.—A Sermon of Archbp. Uſher's, preached before the king on the 20th of June, 1624.

For the noble and ſublime opinions of Confucius, the Chineſe philoſopher, ſee Mod. Univ. Hiſt. vol. VIII. p. 108. 4to.

† Rom. ii. 14.

Inſtead,

Inſtead, therefore, of indulging a fruitleſs concern for the lot and condition of unenlightened Pagans, let us tremble for our own. The purity of their lives, and integrity of their conduct, may involve the ſevereſt reproach upon ourſelves, who have long enjoyed ſo much clearer information, but produced ſo little fruit: and a Cicero, a Socrates, a Plato, or an Epictetus, nay, many of the illiterate and undiſtinguiſhed Heathens may receive the eulogy and applauſes of their judge, while "the "† children of the kingdom," to whom have appertained the promiſes and bleſſings, may, for ever, "be ex-"cluded from the preſence of their "Lord." The rule of heaven is plain and univerſal: equity appointed, and reaſon muſt approve it. Men ſhall only be judged for the talents they have had, and the opportunities they have enjoyed: "to "* whomſoever much is given, of him

† Matt. viii. 11, 12.—Luke xiii. 28, 29.
* Matt. xxv. 29.

"ſhall

" ſhall be much required: he who " † knew his Lord's will, and prepared " not himſelf, neither did according to " that will, ſhall be beaten with many " ſtripes." Where the goſpel hath been offered, and *perverſely* rejected, woe unto that nation: where uncultivated reaſon hath alone been the guide, a conduct correſponding to that inferior information, (and let us leave to heaven to determine both its nature, and extent, and proportions) will be as juſtly entitled to a juſt retribution, as, in a Chriſtian country, can be the faireſt deeds and offices of virtue, ſublimed by Chriſtianity, and encouraged by its ſuperior promiſes and expectations.

Let us now enter fully into the theory of this diſtinction obſervable in the providential diſtribution of bleſſings, and juſtify, as much as poſſible, the wonderful ways of heaven to mankind. Let us examine whether ſuch a difference be only

† Luke xii. 47.

the

the arbitrary appointment of Deity, or whether it doth not neceſſarily ſpring from the permiſſion of free agency; whether it doth not, in a very great degree, conſtitute the nature of a probationary ſtate, and be not neceſſary to the peace, the order, the happineſs, and government of the world.

Let us begin with the diſparity which prevails in external bleſſings: this muſt ſtrike the moſt ſuperficial and careleſs *obſerver. In a natural light, what a † difference may be obſerved in mens capaci-

* See Diſquiſition on ſeveral Subjects, lately publiſhed by Soame Jenyns, Eſq; where this idea is moſt ingeniouſly purſued.

† "It is true, indeed," (ſays an able writer) "there "are degrees of perfection in the creatures, and God is "not equally good to all. Thoſe creatures which are of "more noble and excellent natures, and to which he "hath communicated more degrees of perfection, "they partake more of his goodneſs, and are more "glorious inſtances of it. But every creature partakes "of the divine goodneſs in a certain degree, and ac-"cording to their nature and capacity of it. God, if "he pleaſed, could have made nothing but immortal "ſpirits,

capacities, judgments, memories, genius, ſagacity, and penetration: what amazing gradations exiſt in the ſcale

" ſpirits, and he could have made as many of theſe " as there are individual creatures of all ſorts in the " world. But it ſeemed good to the wiſe Architect to " make ſeveral ranks and orders of being, and to diſ- " play his power, and goodneſs, and wiſdom in all " imaginable variety of creatures, all which ſhould be " good in their kind, though far ſhort of the perfection " of angels and immortal ſpirits.

" He that will build an houſe for all uſes and pur- " poſes, of which a houſe is capable, cannot make it all " foundation, and great beams and pillars; muſt not " ſo contrive it, as to make it *all* rooms of ſtate and " entertainment; but there muſt of neceſſity be in it " meaner materials, rooms, and offices for ſeveral uſes " and purpoſes, which, however inferior to the reſt in " dignity and degree, do yet contribute to the beauty " and advantage of the whole. So in this great frame " of the world, it was fit there ſhould be variety and " different degrees of perfection in the ſeveral parts of " it: and this is ſo far from being an impeachment of " the wiſdom or goodneſs of him that made it, that it " is an evidence of both: for the meaneſt of all God's " creatures is good, conſidering the nature and rank of " it, and the end for which it was deſigned; and we " cannot imagine how it could have been ordered or " framed better, though we can eaſily tell how it might " have been worſe, &c. Till. Ser. fol. vol. II. p. 683.

from

from a Bacon, a Boyle, a Newton, and a Locke, to thoſe whoſe abilities ſcarcely are ſufficient for the elements of knowledge, or the outlines of improvement? And in a civil view, how quickly ſome are raiſed; how many are even *born* to the ſummit of a throne, at leaſt, in a ſplendid palace, have every elegance and luxury of life; while others, by inceſſant toil, ſcarcely can procure the neceſſaries of ſubſiſtence, and depend, when ſickneſs or misfortunes come, on the precarious and ſcanty alms of an unpitying world? An equality of condition, had it been ordained, could not long have ſubſiſted. The moderation, the induſtry, the virtues of ſome; the extravagance, the idleneſs, and vices of others, would have deranged ſuch a ſyſtem, and produced a revolution. This variety of bleſſings is appointed, we juſtly reaſon, by the great ſupreme Director and Parent of the world. But, if all mankind had been originally placed on one common level, it would

ſoon

ſoon have taken place. The induſtry, the moderation, the virtues of ſome, and the indolence, the luxury, the vices of others, would have ſpeedily created the important diſtinction. On the principles of freedom it is, therefore, unavoidable, and ſprings from the neceſſary mode of our exiſtence. But the Deity himſelf hath very wiſely appointed it, in the order of his providence, as a ſource of happineſs, and a principle of enjoyment to his intelligent creatures. Society is the medium of our moſt valuable comforts; and every reflecting perſon will acknowledge, that, in a ſolitary ſtate, even with the greateſt bleſſings, we ſhould pine unbleſſed. We feel the ſtrongeſt inſtinct for ſociety. We are formed for its *enjoyments: but a ſocial life could not poſſibly exiſt without ſubordination; ſubordination without

* See Foſt. Obſerv. in a Voy. round the World, fol. vol. III. p. 338.

a variety of ranks; nor would mankind be happy in their different departments, ſituations, and ranks, without the difference of ſentiment, which neceſſarily ſprings from a difference of allotment, views, and education. Such a variety, in ſhort, is abſolutely neceſſary to the peace, the government, the preſervation of the world, according to the preſent conſtitution of things, eſtabliſhed by a God, whoſe wiſdom is infinite, and whoſe goodneſs is immenſe. If all had an equal advantage, or eminence of capacity, or * fortune, who muſt ſubmit to the drudgeries of life, to the tilling of the earth, the reaping of its fruits, the adminiſtering to our conſtant, manifold neceſſities, or to † thoſe other inferior mechanical employments, which, however low or trifling in themſelves, are neceſſary

* Nich. Conf. vol. 1. p. 117.

† Very appoſite to this ſubject is the reaſoning of St. Paul concerning the different members of the body. 1 Cor. xii. 14.

to

to the world. The philoſophic mind would ill be fitted for theſe inferior occupations; and the labourer would be wretched, who, with feelings as refined, ſentiments as enlarged, and knowledge as increaſed, as can even be poſſeſſed by the higheſt of his brethren, muſt yet condeſcend to the degrading, and very humiliating office of attending to their wants. Happily, however, *providentially* indeed, the views, the knowledge, and the feelings of men are ſuited to their ſtate; and the cottage is not without ſome private comforts denied to the throne. Perhaps, indeed, more poignant ſorrows cluſter upon *greatneſs, and invade its repoſe, than ever faſten upon the poor man's evening pillow, or

* Non enim gazæ neque conſularis
Summovet lictor miſeros tumultus
Mentis, & curas circum laqueata
Tecta volantes.
Hor. Od. lib. 2. od. 16.

Senec. c. 26. Conſol. ad Polybium. Magna ſervitus eſt magna fortuna, &c.

prey upon his thoughts by day. This is the circumſtance (I mean the human feelings being ſuited to † their ſtate) which ſo amazingly connects, preſerves, ſupports, the fabric of ſociety, and harmonizes all the orders of creation. On any other plan, the ſuppoſition, I mean, of an equality in bleſſings, there would be nothing but diſorder, quarrels, and confuſion; a continual competition, who ſhould obey, or who be obeyed. The world would no longer be, ſo immediately as it is, a probationary ſtate; and the exerciſe of many of the Chriſtian

† The ſame ſentiment happily prevails with regard to ſituation. Men, in general, are not only reconciled, but even much attached to their native ſoil, whatever may be its comparative inconveniences. Dr. Reinold Forſter tells us, "that the Savages, on the frozen ex-"tremities of the globe, think themſelves happy, and "even happier than the moſt civilized nation; and every "individual of them is ſo well ſatisfied with his con-"dition, that not even a wiſh is left in his breaſt for "the leaſt alteration." Foſt. Obſ. in a Voy. round the World, vol. III. fol. p. 302.—Letters on Iceland. Obſ. made in the Voyage of Joſeph Banks, Eſq; letter 6. p. 83.

virtues

virtues would neceſſarily be ſuſpended; charity, moderation, ſympathy in the rich, and, in the poor, contentment, induſtry, and reſignation. And then, as to the *difference in religious bleſſings, it

* "After all" (ſays an ingenious reaſoner) "is it not "ſtill perplexing that religious advantages ſhould be ſo "unequally diſtributed?—No: for, like thoſe of nature "and fortune, they are the free gifts of God, who, for "reaſons unknown to us, hath decreed that happineſs "ſhould depend on other circumſtances independent of "perſonal merit, though this, imperfect as it always "is, will be chiefly regarded. Indeed, if it be recon-"cileable with the attributes of the Deity to have "conſtituted different ranks of beings, what cauſe can "be aſſigned, why thoſe of the ſame rank ſhould not "be diſtinguiſhed from each other? It is difficult to "conceive how things could have been ordered other-"wiſe. Were revelation univerſal, it would ſtill be "unequal, unleſs you will require in all the ſame ca-"pacity to underſtand, and diſpoſition to examine it. "Extravagant demand! which ſuits with no ſyſtem, "which limits the exertions of divine goodneſs, and, "by overturning the regular gradation and dependence "of things, annihilates every bleſſing derived from "that ſource." Main. Serm. p. 96.—Secker's Serm. vol. IV. diſc. 8.—See the very ſame train of thought ingeniouſly purſued in Young's Defence of Revel. vol. II. p. 252, &c.

inevitably ſprings and ariſes from the other. If men muſt be born, as neceſſary to the peace and order of the world, with different capacities; if ſome muſt be placed in the higheſt ranks, and others in the loweſt; if ſome muſt be ſituated in a reformed Chriſtian country, and others live under a variety of *governments,

* For the amazing influence which climate, government, laws, &c. have in forming the ſentiments and manners of a people, ſee Helv. on Man.—Mr. Hume's Eſſays on Nation. Charact.—Monteſq. Spir. of Laws.—Ferguſ. Eſſ. on Civ. Societ.—Abbe Chappe's Acc. of a Tour to Siberia. The two latter very able and diſtinguiſhed writers, ſeem to reſolve this wonderful influence chiefly into the force of climate; the other are of opinion, that moral cauſes of education, government, laws, and police, have a greater effect. Wilſon, in his ingenious eſſays on this ſubject, ſeems, in a very forcible manner, to have reconciled theſe contending parties. Beyond the tropics, he apprehends, that the human character may be more formed by the power of climate, which, in ſuch a ſituation is prodigious, than by all other united cauſes. In more temperate regions, he ſuppoſes, that the moral cauſes infinitely preponderate over the natural, and account for the diſtinction. His ſyſtem is ingenious, and his arguments appear

ments, laws, and inſtitutions, where deſpotiſm, bigotry, and ſuperſtition reign, where the monarch gives the word of command, which, at once, ſhall enſlave the body and the mind, or where abſolute ignorance knows no laws, and ſubmits to no reſtraints; if, in ſhort, the world muſt be what it is; and, unleſs the Almighty would entirely alter the preſent eſtabliſhed form and conſtitution of things; a difference in the perception, knowledge, and improvement of moral and religious bleſſings neceſſarily ariſes from the already prevailing and eſtabliſhed difference in the natural external world. Greater abilities are better

pear ſolid and concluſive.—I have nothing more to do with theſe claſhing theories, than only to obſerve, that, on whatever ſide the truth may be, the difference exiſts and ſupports the ſentiment maintained in theſe obſervations.

" Among the cauſes which forwarded the growth of " moral corruptions was the want of laws, and of re- " gular government." Main. Serm. p. 327

calculated for the refinements of inveſtigation, and the office of diſcovery: higher rank ſuppoſes, of courſe, ſuperiority of education, and greater leiſure for proſecuting every ſpecies of improvement, religious, as well as natural or civil. And in a Chriſtian country, where the mind is releaſed from the ſhackles of ſlavery, and the ſtill deeper bondage of ignorance or ſuperſtition; where excellent forms of diſcipline are inſtituted, and inquiry is carried on with liberality and eaſe, the inhabitants have certainly better opportunities for "growing in the grace and "knowledge of their God," and, finally, "becoming * wiſe unto ſalvation." Religious, therefore, as well as natural and civil diſtinctions, neceſſarily muſt ſubſiſt: they are unavoidable in ſociety, and, equally with the other, the very ſoul and eſſence of a probationary ſtate. Before they can be altered, or entirely diſannul-

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

led,

led, we muſt conceive a new form, and mode, and ſyſtem of creation; and whoever cenſures them, cenſures the great Architect and Framer of the univerſe, and virtually declares that ſuch a fabric might have been better contrived and conſtructed; and that it bears, upon its very face, moſt indiſputable marks of defect and imperfection. But "* who art "thou, O man, that replieſt againſt God." Search more minutely into the counſels of providence, and thy arrogant complaints muſt be changed into the raptures of aſtoniſhment and veneration.

It may be urged in objection to theſe obſervations, that whatever may be men's comparative diſadvantages from a difference of circumſtances, and ſecondary cauſes, for receiving the goſpel; however low and uncultivated the capacities of ſome, and however unfavourable their peculiar ſituations; yet that the doctrines of Chriſtianity are ſo extremely plain and

* Rom. ix 20.

ſimple

ſimple in their nature, as to lie on a level with the meaneſt underſtanding; and that the ignorant and the untutored, as well as the moſt learned, penetrating, and ingenious, might be ſuſceptible of their precious and divine informations. The eſſential articles of Chriſtianity, indeed, require no very tedious or elaborate deductions; and, it muſt be allowed, that, a mind not conſiderably poliſhed or informed, might be capable, perhaps, of comprehending their meaning, and bleſſing their directions; but the goſpel, ſo ſoon as propoſed to people in unhappy ſituations, cannot miraculouſly change * them in a moment, as ſome Fanatics have ſuppoſed, or alter all their previouſly eſtabliſhed habits, prejudices, and diſpoſitions: the work of real converſion

* How long people are in emerging from a ſavage and barbarous ſtate, and how ſlowly progreſſive muſt be the change before they are capable of receiving or improving any moral or religious doctrines, ſee Foſter's Obſerv. in a Voy. round the World, fol. vol. III. §. 4. —Rem. on the Human Species.

muſt

muſt be ſlow, and the proceſs muſt be progreſſive: " to † the pure it will be " pure;" but with ſuch as have enjoyed no preparatory advantages to diſpoſe them for its doctrines, and where the ſavageneſs or luxury of the country they inhabit, the want of letters, laws, and order, militate againſt any mode of inſtruction, it is in danger, if beſtowed, of being ſpeedily reſigned for more favourite indulgences and criminal gratifications.

This ſtate of things, in ſhort, and this difference in bleſſings of every kind and of every degree is made, in the natural courſe of providence, the very baſis and the very ſoul of our preſent exiſtence: it originates from the formation of creatures, with free agency, and it is confeſſedly our mode of probation. It is neceſſary to the preſent world, and immediately connected with thoſe important duties which muſt train us for a better. And what is

† Pſalm xviii. 26.

the

the plain religious concluſion, but that we are all here on a trial for eternity; have received an aſtoniſhing diverſity of gifts, natural, civil, moral, and religious; that a Judge will decide upon us, at the laſt, who is intimately acquainted with every circumſtance and peculiarity of our condition, with every degree and opportunity of virtue, with every flaw and imperfection, and will only, hereafter, call us to account for the talents we have enjoyed. Upon this divine, this equitable plan, is not his burden lighteſt, to whom the feweſt talents have been lent? Are not his accounts more eaſily adjuſted, or hath he any reaſon to envy, to be diſſatisfied, or murmur at the lot of thoſe, who, for ſuperior bleſſings, will be ſeverely judged, and if they have abuſed them, have a greater condemnation?

This comfortable doctrine appears to be conveyed by the beautiful and inſtructive parable of the † talents, men-

† Matt. xxv. 14. Luke xix. 13.

tioned

tioned in ſcripture: the Governor of the world is there repreſented, not as dealing out his favours with partiality or caprice, but as diſpenſing to every man according to his particular abilities, and diſpoſition, and capacity to improve and increaſe them. Whatever is withheld from one, is withheld by that amiable principle of compaſſion, which gives it to another: and the ſentiment is exactly analogous to reaſon, and to the beſt conceptions we can form of Deity, which paint him, as alike, the parent of all; and as exerciſing, though we cannot always diſcern it, "a tender mercy over all his works."

* A period,

* Pſalm ii. 8.—xxii. 27.—lxxii. 11.—lxxxvi. 9.—Iſaiah ii. 2.—ix. 7.—xi. 9.—xl. 5.—xlix. 6.—lii. 10.—lv. 5.—lvi. 7.—lx. 9. 11. lxvi. 18. 22.—Ezek. xxxvii. 21.—xxxix. 23. 29.—Dan. ii. 44.—vii. 14. 27.—Hoſh. i. 10.—iii. 5.—Joel iii. 1.—Amos ix. 14.—Micah v. 4.—Zeph. iii. 9.—Zech. ix. 10.—xii. 10.—xiv. 9.—Malac. i. 11.—Matt. xxiv. 14.—Mark xiii. 10.—Luke iii. 6.—xxi. 24.—Acts xiii. 47.—Rom. viii. 19.—xi. 25.—xiv. 11.—1 Cor. xv. 25.—2 Cor. iii. 16.—Revel. xi. 15.—xiv. 6. Some have interpreted theſe prophetic paſſages as promiſing a ſecond appear-

ance

*A period, indeed, is foretold in the ſcriptures, when the doctrines of the goſpel ſhall

ance of our Lord to enjoy a reign with his ſaints upon earth, for a period of a thouſand years, and diſtinguiſhed it by the well known appellation of the Millennium. This doctrine, that Jeruſalem ſhould be raiſed from its preſent ruins, and the Redeemer reſide perſonally there, at the head of a triumphant and glorified church, was embraced by ſome early and diſtinguiſhed writers, who were defenders of the Chriſtian faith. Juſtin Martyr and Iræneus, who lived in the ſecond century, were amongſt its abettors. Vid. Juſt. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 307. and Iren. adv. Hæreſ. lib. 5. c. 34, &c. Imagination, always more peculiarly vigorous in a warm and eaſtern climate, hath decked this future epoch with all the gaudy colourings of ſublunary delight. Something of a Mahometan, terreſtrial paradiſe, though pruned, we muſt confeſs, from a few of its more extravagant ſenſualities, is exhibited to the view. Lactantius gives us this very luxurious deſcription, "Terra vero aperiet fœcunditatem ſuam, & uberrimas "fruges ſua ſponte generabit. Rupes montium melle "ſudabunt, per rivos vina decurrent & flumina lacte "inundabunt." Lib. 7, c. 24. It reminds one of the Cumæan predictions in Virgil:

"Molli paulatim flaveſcet campus ariſtâ,
"Incultiſque rubens pendebit ſentibus uva
"Et duræ quercus ſudabunt roſcida mella."

Vir. Poll. Ecl. 4.

Others

ſhall univerſally prevail; when every heart ſhall become more immediately a temple to the Deity: when the world ſhall be delivered from ambition and from avarice, from malice and reſentment, from envy and ill-nature, thoſe dæmons to its preſent eaſe; when War, and all its ſtalking ghoſts ſhall be for ever bound in adamantine chains, and

Others have, a little differently, underſtood the meaning of this Millennium, and confined the future poſſeſſion of it to the ſuperior virtue and innocence of thoſe martyrs, who expired ſo very nobly in teſtimony of the truth.

The ſentiment of all our moſt judicious commentators differs from this primitive perſuaſion of the church. Dr. Whitby hath taken conſiderable pains to elucidate the matter, and his ſucceſs appears equal to his labour. He hath combated all the arguments produced by Mr. Mead, Mr. Daille, Dr. Burnet, and very clearly proved, that the paſſage in the Apocalypſe, c. 20. ver. 4. is only meant of the Jewiſh converſion to the Chriſtian faith, and the glorious proſperity, in which the church ſhould flouriſh and rejoice after the deſtruction of Antichriſt and ſin. Grotius, Hammond, and Poole, in his Synopſis, confirm the idea. Vide Grot. Tom. 2. p. 1227.—Hammon. Annot. fol. vol. p. 997. and Poole's Synopſ. vol. 5. p. 1983.

the

the widow and the fatherleſs ſhall weep no more: or, to uſe the moſt forcible language in the world, " when * the " wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and " the leopard ſhall lie down with the " kid; when they ſhall no longer hurt " or deſtroy in all the holy mountain, " ſince the earth ſhall be filled with the " knowledge of the Lord, as the " † waters cover the ſeas." Every pious heart anticipates this period with triumph and delight.—Haſte, auſpicious æra! ‡ golden moments come! But, in order to this end, Providence will act, probably, by theſe natural ſecondary cauſes, which have here been adduced: ſome univerſal empire ſwallowing up the reſt,

* Iſaiah xi. 6. † Iſaiah xi. 9.

‡ Talia ſæcla, ſuis dixerunt, currite, fuſis. Virg.

It hath been mentioned, by all writers on the ſubject, as a reaſon for our bleſſed Lord's appearing in the world at the particular time he did, that the Roman empire was eſtabliſhed almoſt univerſally, and had, in fact, afforded that particular advantage for which I am contending.

eſtabliſh-

eſtabliſhing an uniformity of external advantages for the reception of this bleſſing, and throwing the, at preſent, infinite varieties of human character into a ſtrong ſimilarity of colour and appearance, will, perhaps, be the happy, the adorable method of bringing about the important revolution, and fixing a ſimilarity of religious ſentiment through all the collected nations of the earth. Thus the now confuſed particles and elements in the Chriſtian, as once in the natural, world, lying in a ſhapeleſs and diſcordant chaos, "without form, and "void, and darkneſs moving upon the "face of the *deep," yet, "thus anima-"ted by the Spirit of God, ſtirring on the "waters," may aſſume one pleaſing and unvaried face of beauty and perfection.

It hath been, I know, the opinion of ſome, that the Holy Spirit, confined as it is not to any age, or country, or people, is, of itſelf, ſufficient without any

* Geneſ. i 2.

written law to direct us, by its own internal leſſons, to the knowledge of our duty, and that no other guide or teacher whatſoever is neceſſary to our attainment of eternal life.

* The benefits to be derived from this holy Comforter are unſpeakable and divine.

* Nemo igitur vir magnus ſine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. 2. p. 124, 125.

It is aſtoniſhing to what degrees of extravagance and abſurdity a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm will ſometimes carry even well diſpoſed and well informed minds. When men once begin to fancy that they are perſonally the receptacles of this immediate, extraordinary, divine illumination, no ſentiments are too extravagant, no errors are too palpable for them to adopt. As they ſuppoſe their information to come preciſely from the ſame channel, through which it likewiſe flowed to the prophets and apoſtles, it may ſuggeſt many points infinitely beyond what the ſcriptures have advanced, and, indeed, ſometimes contrary to them. And however dangerous or fatal theſe new fancied revelations may, in reality, be, yet they are conſecrated by the mode in which they are imported, and the divine Beſtower is ſuppoſed to be injured even by the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of the truth. On ſuch a principle as this every man's breaſt may contain a new code of laws and inſtructions, and a freſh ſcripture may be continually produced, filled with the rhapſodies,

vine. They are acknowledged by the ſpeculative; they are the triumphs of the real

rhapſodies, reveries, and infatuations of the authors who compoſe it.

If ſuch people had any remains of reaſon and cool argument, (but thoſe have long been ſwallowed up in the vortex of imagination) I would earneſtly recommend to them a careful and deliberate peruſal of Mr. Locke's moſt excellent chapter on Enthuſiaſm. "Immediate "revelation" (ſays that great man) "being a much "eaſier way for men to eſtabliſh their opinion, and re- "gulate their conduct by than the tedious, and not "*always* ſucceſsful, labour of ſtrict reaſoning; it is no "wonder that ſome have been very apt to pretend to "revelation, and to perſuade themſelves that they are "under the peculiar guidance of heaven in their actions "and opinions, eſpecially in thoſe of them which they "cannot account for by the ordinary methods of know- "ledge and principles of reaſon. Hence we ſee, that "in all ages, men, in whom melancholy has mixed "with devotion, or, whoſe conceit of themſelves has "raiſed them into an opinion of a greater familiarity "with God, and a nearer admittance to his favour than "is afforded to others, have often flattered themſelves "with aſſurance of an immediate intercourſe with the "Deity, and frequent communications from the divine "Spirit. God, I own, cannot be denied to be able to "enlighten the underſtanding by a ray darted into the "mind immediately from the fountain of light. This,

real and experienced Chriſtian. The illumination which this Spirit gives to the cloud-

" they underſtand, he has promiſed to do, and who then
" has ſo good a title to expect it as thoſe who are his
" peculiar people, choſen by him, and depending on
" him? Their minds being thus prepared, whatever
" groundleſs opinion comes to ſettle itſelf ſtrongly upon
" their fancies is an illumination from the Spirit of
" God, and preſently of divine authority: and what-
" ſoever odd actions they find in themſelves a ſtrong in-
" clination to do, that impulſe is concluded to be a
" call or direction from heaven, and muſt be obeyed:
" it is a commiſſion from above, and they cannot err in
" executing it." In another part of the chapter, he remarks, " The love of ſomething extraordinary, the eaſe
" and glory it is to be inſpired, and be above the common
" and natural ways of knowledge, ſo flatters many
" men's lazineſs, ignorance, and vanity, that, when
" once they are got into this way of immediate reve-
" lation, of illumination without ſearch, and of cer-
" tainty without proof and without examination, it is
" a hard matter to get them out of it. Reaſon is loſt
" upon them; they are above it; they ſee the light in-
" fuſed into their underſtanding, and cannot be miſ-
" taken; it is clear and viſible there, like the light of
" bright ſun-ſhine, ſhews itſelf, and needs no other
" proof but its own evidence: they feel the hand of
" God moving them within, and the impulſes of the
" Spirit, and cannot be miſtaken in what they feel.
" Thus

clouded ſoul; its influences to ſupport us in every period of diſtreſs; the aids which

" Thus they ſupport themſelves, and are ſure Reaſon " hath nothing to do with what they ſee and feel in " themſelves; what they have a ſenſible experience of " admits no doubt, needs no probation. Would he " not be ridiculous, who ſhould require to have it " proved to him that the light ſhines, and that he ſees " it? It is its own proof, and can have no other. When " the Spirit brings light into our minds, it diſpels " darkneſs. We ſee it as we do that of the ſun at " noon, and need not the twilight of reaſon to ſhew it " us. This light from heaven is ſtrong, clear, and " pure; carries its own demonſtration with it; and we " may, as rationally, take a glow worm to aſſiſt us to " diſcover the ſun, as to examine the cæleſtial ray by " our dim candle, Reaſon."

The following remarks deſerve to be written in letters of gold, as affording, if attended to, a certain preſervative from this dangerous, extravagant ſpecies of impoſture. " He, therefore, that will not give himſelf up " to all the extravagancies of error and deluſion, muſt " bring this guide of his light within to the trial. " God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake " the man; he leaves all his faculties in their natural " ſtate, to enable him to judge of his inſpirations, " whether they be of divine original or no. When he " illuminates the mind with ſupernatural light, he does " not extinguiſh that which is natural. If he would

which it adminiſters to our moral weakneſſes; the purity with which it inſpires the

" have us aſſent to the truth of any propoſition, he " either evidences this truth by the uſual methods of " natural reaſon, or elſe makes it known to be a truth, " which he would have us aſſent to, by his authority, " and convinces us that it is from him by ſome marks " which Reaſon cannot be miſtaken in. Reaſon muſt " be our beſt judge and guide in every thing. I do " not mean that we muſt conſult Reaſon, and examine " whether a propoſition revealed from God can be made " out by natural principles; and if it cannot, that " then we may reject it. But conſult it we muſt, and " by it examine, whether it be a revelation from " God or no: and if Reaſon finds it to be revealed " from God, Reaſon then declares for it as much as for " any other truth, and makes it one of her dictates." People, in ſhort, who ſet up themſelves as inſtances of an extraordinary illumination, and conſequently reveal doctrines contrary to thoſe which are generally received, and much ſurpaſſing human comprehenſion, are certainly called upon by the nature of their pretenſions to give the world ſome very ſtriking teſtimony that " they " are from God." Moſes and the prophets, the apoſtles, and our Lord himſelf, expected only to be received and believed by working various and ſtriking miracles to confirm their aſſertions. And there can, certainly, be *ſtill* no reaſon why a prophet ſhould be embraced or welcomed amongſt us upon weaker credentials, or leſs ſufficient

the affections; and the vigour it ſupplieth to the fainting heart, were felt by the

ſufficient proofs of a divine interpoſition. At the period when theſe extraordinary vouchſafements were indulged, an infant, perſecuted, and uneſtabliſhed church required their intervention. This miraculous working of the Holy Spirit hath, therefore, been for many ages, providentially ſuſpended, nor doth the ſcripture, in any of its pages, give us reaſon to expect a renewal of this intereſting diſpenſation. It doth not, indeed, appear to be neceſſary to thoſe eſſential intereſts of Chriſtianity for which it was originally permitted and beſtowed. Light is fairly come into the world: "If any man walk in "darkneſs" the fault is his own: it is, probably, to ſkreen ſome criminal, unhappy conduct, and "becauſe "his deeds are evil." And the goſpel hath been eſtabliſhed by ſuch irrefragable evidence, and, withal, ſuch a train of miraculous events, that, "if men hear "not Moſes and the prophets, and, more particularly, "the declarations of the Son of God, neither would "they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead." Let thoſe, therefore, who think themſelves theſe more immediate oracles of heaven, ſeriouſly conſider whether they are not acting under the infatuating deluſion of their own ſpirit, and "believing a lie," rather than a peculiar revelation from "the Father of lights;" and, whether there be not ſomething formidable to their caſe in that awful declaration of the revelation, that, "whoſoever ſhall add any thing to the words written

the primitive, and, though the ſtream of its benefits, for providential reaſons now flows conſiderably ſhallower, will be taſted by the lateſt Chriſtians of the world. They are privileges which are much ſuperior to eulogy, and beggar all the gratitude of praiſe. When Chriſtianity made its firſt appearance in the world, they ſupported its poor illiterate profeſſors under all the viciſſitudes to which they were expoſed, and ſoftened, in a very conſiderable degree, their hardſhips and misfortunes. They diſarmed perſecution of its native horrors; ſtripped Majeſty of its intimidating threats; converted "a * den of lions and a burning fiery furnace" into an aſylum of repoſe, and a ſcene of devotion. They inſpired a thankſgiving hymn in the † priſon of confinement; and they ſmiled, with a triumphant dignity and eaſe, at the very drearieſt ſhapes and appendages

"in that book, God ſhall add to him the plagues that "are written therein."

* Dan. vi. † Acts xvi.

of

of diſſolution: and their influences, at this day, would be more generally known, if they were more generally confeſſed and believed, and implored with a correſponding innocence of heart, and purity of conduct.

But if an *inward illumination from this Spirit had been ſufficient without an external revelation, to which we might appeal for the certainty of its ſuggeſtions, it would be difficult, perhaps impoſſible, to aſſign any reaſon why a written law was revealed to the world, or why any human methods whatſoever were deemed neceſſary to underſtand, explain, and enforce it: on ſuch a principle as this, there could be no neceſſity for any pains or application, or for the preſent inſtituted diſcipline and modes of Chriſtian inſtruction. It is probable, likewiſe, that nothing leſs than a primæval innocence, the happy and undeviating rectitude of paradiſe, could be worthy to be truſted

* Concerning the abſurdities of this doctrine, ſee Butler's Div. Anal. c. ii. p. 19.

with,

with, or make a proper uſe of, ſo divine a diſtinction. Conſtituted as we are, and depraved by our paſſions, the moſt unhappy conſequences neceſſarily muſt flow from ſuch a mode of inſtruction: to the ignorant and weak it would open a wide door of enthuſiaſm and conceit; to the deſigning, of impoſtures; to all, of embarraſſment, perplexity, and deluſion. Some would be perpetually entertaining themſelves with imaginary flights, and viſions, and revelations; and others, in order to impoſe upon mankind, would hypocritically feign them. Amid the infinite variety of divine communications felt or pretended, there could be no ſtandard or uniformity of faith, or ſentiment, or practice; there would exiſt no criterion of falſhood, or of truth, of reality, or imagination. In public worſhip, particularly, which is confeſſedly neceſſary to the exiſtence of Chriſtianity in a ſtate where we are ſo much impreſſed by external things, each

" would

" would have a * pſalm, would have a " doctrine, and an interpretation:" all would be teachers, prophets, and apoſtles; none would be taught; and men diſtracted with the cares of buſineſs, engroſſed and unnerved with the pleaſures of the world, or engaged in the purſuits and projects of ambition, would be but poorly fitted to be immediately the reſidence of ſuch an holy oracle, or utter its inſtructions.

Upon the whole, if we contemplate the conduct of the Deity at large in the diſpenſation of his mercies, as creating man, originally, in holineſs and purity, planting in his ſoul the cleareſt principles and knowledge of his duty; when that light was unhappily obſcured by the fall, condeſcending to renew it by immediate communications, and even by the honour of a perſonal appearance to the ancient patriarchs, the few, who deſerved it; in the infancy of time, ex-

* 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

tending

tending all thoſe tender aids, which infancy requires, leading the yet ſcarce formed feet into the paths of righteouſneſs, and ſtrengthening the "yet *feeble "knees;" appointing illuminated men to ariſe in almoſt every part and diſtrict of the world, when, notwithſtanding all theſe vigilant precautions, Idolatry had almoſt overſpread the earth; if we conſider him as, *then*, impoſing the apparently hard yoke of Judaiſm only as beſt fitted to the exigencies of the times, as beſt adapted to the genius of that people, and ſo ſtrongly prefigurative of his grand, approaching, final intention; if we conſider him as ſelecting the Jews from the reſt of mankind to be depoſitaries of his laws, becauſe their ſtubborn and unſocial temper, not eaſily incorporating with the manners of the world, was likely to preſerve them from ſurrounding idolatry, and becauſe by the after events of their

* Iſaiah xxxv. 3.

lives,

lives, their captivities, and their diſperſions, they appeared the moſt likely inſtruments of diffuſing it moſt generally to almoſt all the kingdoms of the world; if we conſider him, as, in the intervening ſpace betwixt them and the goſpel, giving the ſtrongeſt and the cleareſt notices of this approaching revelation by various prophets and illuminated men, in order to diſpoſe the human heart for its effectual reception, and, in the mean time, accepting every faithful worſhipper who approached him through types, in virtue of this grand, this univerſal ſacrifice, which ſhould, afterwards, be offered for the general accumulated load of tranſgreſſions; if we view him as communicating the goſpel, at a time when external events were in a proper train to accelerate its growth, intending that its tidings ſhould be publiſhed to all, but defeated in this kind and comprehenſive purpoſe by human vices and human imperfections; our want of zeal, perhaps,

haps, in ſending out "* ſufficient labour-
"ers into his foreign vineyard;" the in-competency or indolence of the miſ-ſionaries themſelves; the unamiable im-preſſions which foreigners may juſtly have conceived of our religion from the badneſs of our lives, the licentiouſneſs of our examples, and the perſonal in-juries they have received from Europeans in the courſe of their worldly, temporal connexions, or by any other external, ſecondary cauſes, obſtructing its advance-ment; if we conceive him as withhold-ing the goſpel from ſome countries, be-cauſe from various obſtructions and diſ-advantages they would, probably, have abuſed it—or, in the worſt and moſt im-probable view, if we even ſuppoſe him as not intending Chriſtianity for an uni-verſal rule, leaving many nations to the light of reaſon and the ſuggeſtions of their conſcience, but preparing, at the

* Luke x. 2.

ſame time, in a future heaven, " a " * variety of manſions" to receive the moſt different worſhippers hereafter, who have ſerved him here in ſincerity and truth, accepting as well the virtuous and honeſt Heathen, who hath lived to his convictions, even as the more illuminated Chriſtian, and bleſſing all to the fulleſt extent of their capacity, and the nature of their ſtate; what ſublime, adorable ſentiments muſt we conceive of the wiſdom, goodneſs, equity, perfections, and providence of God; how conſiſtent, how harmonious, how connected doth it make the, hitherto, mutilated ſcheme of the goſpel; how amazingly doth the mind dilate and expand in the idea of a God thus *univerſally* benevolent, thus *impartially* merciful, and, in all his various ſchemes from the beginning of the world even to the preſent hour, thus *minutely* attentive to the *fluctuating* wants and exi-

* John xiv. 2.

gences

gences of his creatures, and having *ſolely in contemplation*, through all the varying circumſtances of his plan, the diffuſion of *univerſal* happineſs and good: how effectually do theſe rational convictions overthrow each unjuſt, overweening opinion of ourſelves, of our privileges, or attainments; diſſipate every narrow Jewiſh prejudice of partiality and diſtinction; teach us to look on our fellow-creatures in the aggregate, as much upon a level, and embrace them in the arms of unconfined love, becauſe, though differing in little external circumſtances *here* of country or condition, they are all children of the ſame God, equally objects of his parental care, watched by his providence, "* guided by his counſels," and formed to be our future companions in glory, and the manſions of the bleſſed. What a confidence do theſe perſuaſions inſpire in the univerſal Parent and Governour of

* Pſalm lxxiii. 25.

the

the world; on what a certain and unchanging baſis do they place our expectations of happineſs and comfort; and how naturally, when warmed with this exhilarating ſubject, doth the heart break out into that juſt acknowledgment: "* Great and marvellous are thy works, "O Lord God Almighty; juſt and true "are thy ways, O King of Saints."

Thus a Traveller, in ſome dark and foggy morning, ſcarcely able to diſcern the path he traverſes, and chilled with the coldneſs of the atmoſphere about him, when the ſun ariſes, and he hath gained the ſummit of ſome lofty hill, which ſhews him nature in its pleaſing colours, an immenſity of woods, and vales, and mountains, gilded by the ſun, diverſified with multitudes of animated beings, and crowned by the view of diſtant cities, gliſtering ſpires, verdant meadows, magnificent heaths, and

* Rev. xv. 3.

" * valleys ſtanding ſo thick with corn, " that they even laugh and ſing," feels his ſpirits amazingly refreſhed, his views of the Creator magnified and expanded, his heart dilated with complacency and joy, and his voice impelled by almoſt, as it were, an involuntary impulſe to join in the general praiſe, and harmony, and rapture of creation.

Let us then, as the baſis of all religious principle, endeavour to form juſt, and worthy, and exalted conceptions of the attributes of God, of his univerſal wiſdom, and juſtice, and compaſſion: that our devotion may be the pure and voluntary oblation of a grateful heart, not ſwelled by overweening opinions of ourſelves, not extorted by a ſervile and degrading fear, and not ſhaded by a dark and gloomy ſuperſtition.—In order to this, let us remember how inſufficient judges of the divine adminiſtrations they

* Pſalm lxv. 13.

muſt

muſt *always* be, who *individually* occupy but ſuch a little ſpan in the period even of the world's duration: whoſe finite underſtanding is unable to behold, without being dazzled, the ſplendours which * ſurround the throne of the Almighty,

or

* On this ſubject, ſee the ſublime and animated ſentiments of the great Monſieur Paſcal. Let not man, therefore, content himſelf with the ſight of thoſe objects which immediately ſurround him. Let him contemplate all nature in its height of majeſty and fulneſs of perfection. Let him conſider the great body of the ſun, ſet up as an eternal lamp to enlighten the univerſe. Let him ſuppoſe the earth to be only a point in reſpect of the vaſt circuit which this luminary deſcribes: and, for his great aſtoniſhment, let him obſerve, that even this vaſt circuit is but a point itſelf compared with the firmament and orb of the fixed ſtars. If his ſight be limited here, let his imagination at leaſt paſs beyond. He may ſooner exhauſt the power of conceiving than nature can want a new ſtore to furniſh out his conceptions. The whole extent of viſible things is but one line or ſtroke in the ample boſom of nature. No idea can reach the immeaſurable compaſs of her ſpace. We may grow as big as we pleaſe with notion, but we ſhall bring forth mere atoms, inſtead of real and ſolid diſcoveries.

or adequately comprehend the real ſprings, and principles, and cauſes of his

This is an infinite ſphere, the center of which is every where, and the circumference no where. In a word, it is the greateſt amongſt all the ſenſible marks and characters of the Almighty power of God, and let our imagination loſe itſelf in this reflexion.

If a man can recover himſelf from ſuch a proſpect, let him conſider what he himſelf is when compared with the whole expanſion of being. Let him conclude that he is accidentally ſtrayed into this blind corner of nature, and, from what he finds of his preſent dungeon, let him learn to ſet the proper value on the earth, on kingdoms, and cities, and on himſelf.

What is man with regard to this infinity about him? Who can fix his diſtance, or comprehend his proportion? —But to ſhew him another prodigy, no leſs aſtoniſhing, let a mite, for inſtance, in the contemptible minuteneſs of its body, preſent him with parts incomparably more minute, with jointed legs, veins in thoſe legs, blood in thoſe veins, humours in that blood, drops in thoſe humours, vapours in thoſe drops. Let him ſtill apply all his force, and ſtrain his utmoſt conception to divide the leaſt of thoſe particulars which we have mentioned; and when he has gone as far as his mind can reach, let the concluding atom be the ſubject of our diſcourſe.

He will probably ſuppoſe that this is the remoteſt extreme, the laſt diminutive in nature. But even in this, where he finds himſelf obliged to ſtop, I ſhall undertake

his amazing diſpenſations: whoſe world at large is *but a ſpeck*, compared with the prodigious vaſtneſs of the univerſe, and may have connexions with ſome other worlds, of which we cannot, now, even form a conception; and whoſe higheſt virtues,

take ſtill to open before him a new abyſs of wonders. Let him conceive me delineating to him on the ſurface of this imperceptible atom, not only the viſible world, but whatſoever he is able to comprehend of the immenſity of all things. Let him here behold an infinity of worlds, each with its firmaments, its planets, its earth, under the ſame proportions as in the natural ſyſtem: let him ſtill imagine every ſuch earth to be ſtored with all living things, and even with its mites: and let him conſider that it is poſſible that each of theſe mites may again preſent him with ſuch a painted world as he admired in the firſt, and that the ſhew may ſtill be repeated without end and without reſt.

Let him again loſe himſelf in theſe wonders, no leſs ſurprizing for their minuteneſs, than the former for their vaſtneſs and extent. And who will not be confounded to reflect that our body, which before was judged imperceptible in reſpect to the world, which world is itſelf imperceptible in the boſom of univerſal Being, ſhould now become a coloſſus, a world, or rather an univerſality of being in reſpect of that exquiſite diminution, at which our laſt refinement of thought may by this artifice arrive, &c. &c. Paſc. Relig. Thoughts, c. 22.

in

in a probationary ſtate, were always intended to be faith and patience, humility and reſignation. That goſpel which heaven hath graciouſly afforded us, let us thankfully embrace as the higheſt of all privileges which men could receive, or God could beſtow, the nobleſt of diſtinctions; as calculated to refine us for the ſuperlative felicity of that future ſtate, in which is prepared, according to the different capacities for enjoying them, a "* variety "of manſions." Let us zealouſly and conſtantly recommend it by our advices, adorn it by our lives, enforce it by our examples, and diffuſe it, ſo far as our influence extends, to all—to the remoteſt regions of the globe; particularly by ſupporting that noble †inſtitution, which is founded for the godlike charitable purpoſe of univerſalizing its directions, that

* John xiv. 2.

† The Society for the Propagation of the Goſpel in Foreign Parts.

every

every individual, of whatever ſect, or people, or country, Indian and Turk, Savage and Barbarian, may be admitted to equal privileges with ourſelves, and, as they are partakers of the ſame nature, may be partakers of the ſame diſtinctions here, and of equal glory and happineſs hereafter. Amid all the ſeeming diſorders and inconſiſtencies of the moral world, let us firmly rely on this aſſurance and conviction, that, at a future approaching tribunal, every * pitiable circumſtance in any

* " But, indeed, with reſpect to ſalvation, the ſtate " of mankind is not on ſo very different a footing, as is " apt to be imagined. For, however the learned man " may value himſelf on a ſuperior genius and capacity " to the reſt of mankind; however the Chriſtian, that " he hath ſeen in his days the light of the goſpel; " he muſt remember, that to whom much is given from " him will be much required. On the other hand, " the poor of ſoul may comfort himſelf, that to whom " little, little; and the blind of underſtanding, that " God will not expect more from any one than he has " given him abilities to perform. Infinite juſtice will " allow for the different capacities and underſtandings " of

any nation or individual will have its full proportions of allowance; that inevitable diſadvantages will be graciouſly conſidered, invincible ignorance candidly forgiven, and only *they condemned by their Judge*, who, either in a Chriſtian or an Heathen country, have not duly exerciſed the talents they have received, or faithfully and conſcientiouſly lived up to the light and privileges they have enjoyed.

" of men, and the different means of knowledge which " have been offered to them, nor will he require the " ſame improvement to be made of a few talents that " he will of many, but of each in proportion. And, " agreeably, St. Paul tells us, as to the point I am " ſpeaking to, that as many as have ſinned without " law, ſhall alſo periſh without law, and as many as have " ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law. Rom. ii. " 12. Thoſe who have tranſgreſſed againſt the mere " law of nature ſhall be judged and puniſhed by the " laws of nature, whilſt thoſe who have ſinned againſt " the revealed law, ſhall receive a puniſhment propor- " tionable to the abuſe of ſuch a greater light." Young's Def. of Rev. vol. II. c. 4. p. 253, 254.

THE END.

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